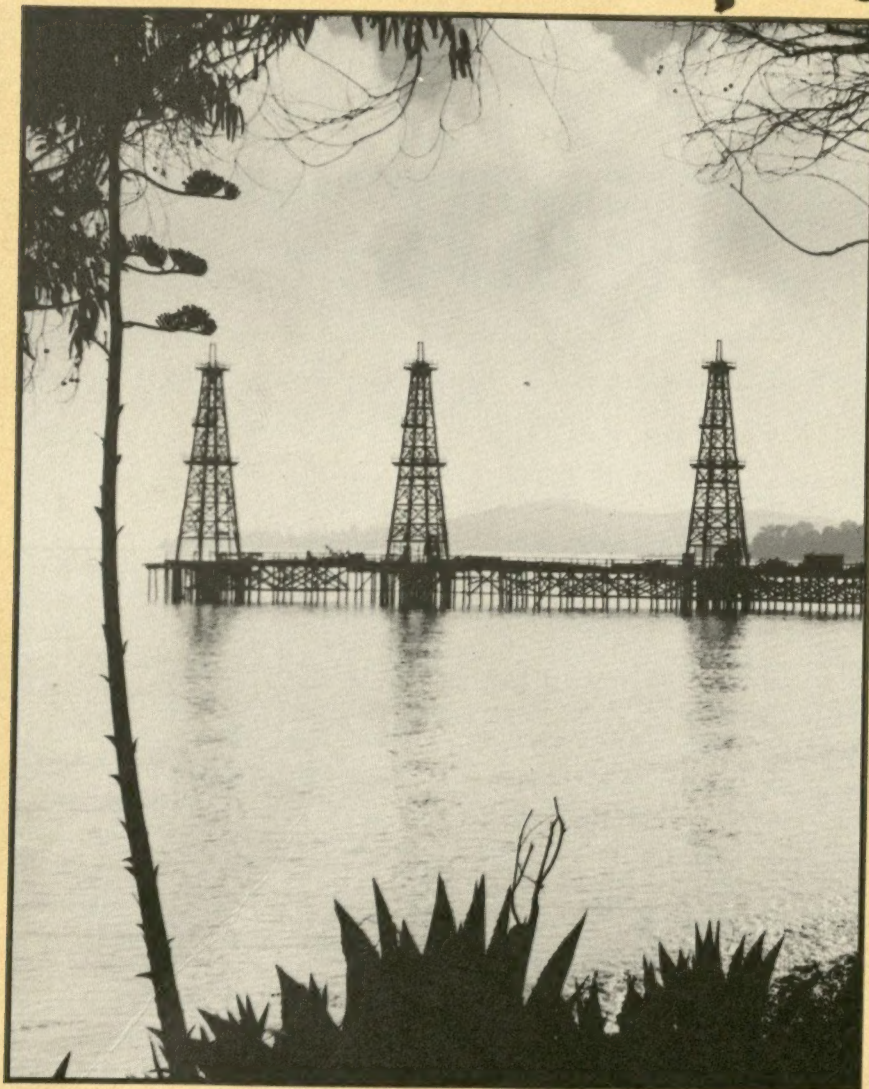

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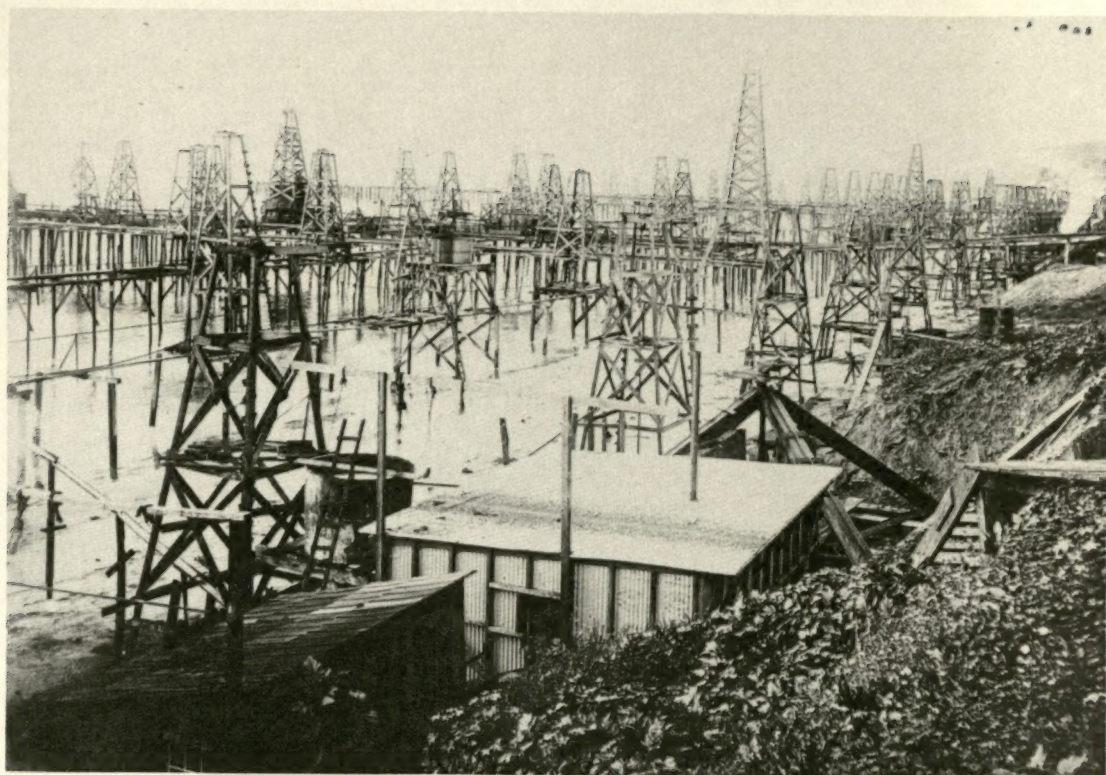
Winter 1988

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Summerland's
Black Gold



Conventional wisdom has it that "history repeats itself." At the turn of the century, the small settlement of Summerland was the site of the world's first significant offshore oil operations and the local building trade was booming. Today, the lights of the offshore oil platforms can be seen for miles on a clear night and Summerland has again experienced a flurry of construction activity. It seems appropriate then to present the story of Summerland oil: David Myrick on the early years and Henry Kleine's chronicle of the Seaside Oil Company.

Errata: In the Autumn issue of NOTICIAS, the photograph on page 52 identified as Captain Martin Morse Kimberly is actually Charles Webster Merritt, brother of Jane Merritt Kimberly, the Captain's wife.

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Summerland

THE FIRST DECADE

David F. Myrick

David Myrick has authored numerous works on the history of California and the American West. He is currently working on the second volume of his two-volume history of Montecito. He has previously contributed several articles to NOTICIAS.

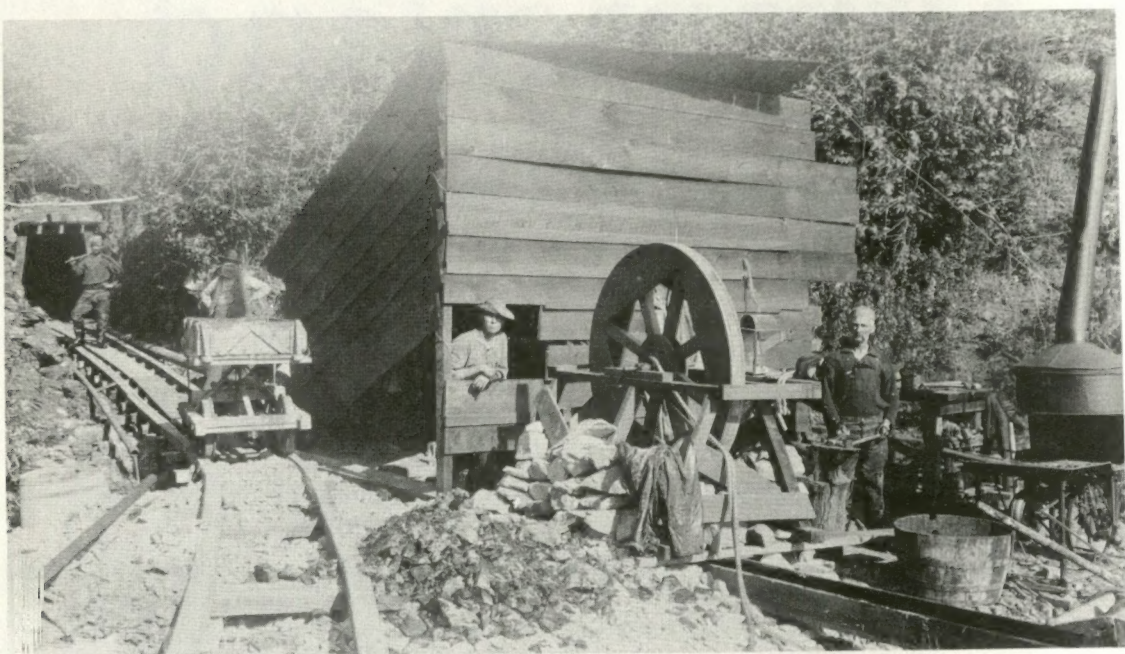
MUCH OF TODAY'S OIL comes from fields under the ocean, such as in the North Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, or along the coast of California. Aside from differing political and environmental viewpoints, the concept of petroleum under the ocean evokes no special comment. For a number of years following the discovery of oil in Pennsylvania in 1859, recovery was made by wells firmly established on land and the sight of a field of oil derricks extending from the Summerland shore into the ocean was a scene of wonder. Today, Summerland's pleasant countenance belies any impression that this was a bustling oil town at the end of the 1890's.

Early Oil Developments

The presence of two Ortega Ranches along the Santa Barbara coast invites some

confusion, but in this story, only the Ortega Ranch underlying and surrounding Summerland will be considered. At one time, Apolonio Zúñiga was the owner of this ranch of more than 1,000 acres but, by the time he died in 1874, hard times had fallen and the ranch was in other hands.

Dr. James B. Shaw, a Santa Barbara pioneer doctor and rancher, held the title, which he conveyed to Burkill Jacques on November 29, 1872. Jacques, a native of England, had come to Santa Barbara the year before and, with his brother-in-law Ralph Kinton Stevens, raised sheep on his Ortega Ranch. The sheep business was financially unremunerative and on April 11, 1883, Jacques sold the land to Henry L. Williams. Jacques went to San Diego County and Stevens settled in Montecito. However, during his ownership, Jacques might have become a wealthy oil operator, had the discov-



Besides their efforts in Oil Spring Canyon, the Occidental Petroleum and Mining Company also ran an operation in nearby Toro Canyon, pictured here, circa 1881.

eries of petroleum been more prolific and timely.

As 1877 began, William A. Hocking of Santa Barbara discovered oil seepage at the southeast corner of Ortega Hill, which was part of Jacques' ranch. On March 5, 1877, after two months of preparation, Hocking became the first person to drill for oil within the boundaries of Santa Barbara County as it then existed. The arrangements between Jacques and Hocking are not known, but there is a report that Hocking secured a ten-year lease of the property. Working together with hand tools, the two men had dug down only 70 feet after three months effort, but there were good indications, for each night the oil would fill a pipe. A sample of the heavy black oil, refined in Ventura, was said to yield a good quality of lubricating oil.

Hand tools were inefficient, Hocking realized, so he rounded up eighteen prom-

inent Santa Barbara men, mostly merchants, to subscribe to most of the \$200,000 authorized capital stock of the Ortega Hill Oil Company. The shareholders included Dr. S. B. Brinkerhoff, merchants C. S. Shotwell and M. P. Austin and lawyer Jarrett J. Richards. Significantly, Burkill Jacques was not among the subscribers when incorporation papers were filed on August 6, 1877. Visiting their oil property was the main interest of the shareholders; certainly pride of ownership was the only reward these men would ever receive for their investment. At one meeting at the site, some stockholders considered boring at a different location, but apparently were dissuaded by the prospects which Hocking described in glowing terms.

In September 1877, the shaft near the beach was down 150 feet and the pipe contained about 60 feet of seepage oil. Drawn out by an iron bucket and depos-

ited in a large vat, the "well" furnished an average of two barrels each day.

There were other shallow wells on the hillside, some drilled by the Klamroth brothers, and for a time there was talk of building a 500-foot wharf so that ships could take the product to market. In January 1878, an assessment of 20 cents a share was levied on the stock (par value \$10 each). Four months later, the beach well was down more than 200 feet and "the prospect seems good." The results, however, were disappointing, so the dreams of the wharf vanished and eventually the Ortega Hill oil well was abandoned.

Meanwhile, another group of men, working in what was dubbed "Oil Spring Canyon," endeavored to create an oil field in the foothills. About 1865, when Pedro Masini searched for asphaltum, he discovered the oil seepage. Nothing transpired for a time, but in May 1877, James H. Swift, a member of an early Montecito family, joined W. C. Stratton, J. W. Dean, rancher W. W. Hollister, and others to form the Santa Barbara Oil Company with a capital stock of \$25,000.

Oil Spring Canyon

The oil prospect was several miles beyond the perimeter of the Ortega Ranch, in a canyon just east of Toro Canyon and about three miles from shore. Its production was disappointing, for the story was the same, as promises of an oil field are not always fulfilled on the basis of oil seepage. The project was revived in 1883, and six years later, the oil claims were leased to the Occidental Petroleum and Mining Company, in which Issac K. Fisher was a leading figure. Rather than a vertical bore, an adit (tunnel) was run into the mountain to tap the oil, with mixed

results. However, because of its close proximity to Summerland, it did influence the thinking of that community about the prospects of oil production.

As previously mentioned, the sheep venture of Jacques and Stevens was unsuccessful and the two men went their separate ways. On April 11, 1883, after nearly ten years of ownership, Jacques sold Rancho Ortega, consisting of nine parcels aggregating 1049.88 acres, to H. L. Williams for \$17,000. Subsequent events radically changed the lifestyle of that area.

Summerland's Founder

Born in Massillon, Ohio, in 1841, Henry Lafayette Williams joined the Union Army just before reaching his majority and from then onward, he spent little time in his hometown. On May 10, 1865, just a few weeks after the hostilities had ended, he returned to Massillon to marry Sarah C. Everhard, a former childhood schoolmate, whom he always called "Katie." During the next 18 years, H. L. Williams, as he signed his letters, had a varied career. In 1870, he was a wholesale coal salesman and then became secretary of the Central Shaft Coal Mining Company of Cambridge, Ohio, in which he was also a substantial stockholder. In February 1871, Williams moved to Toledo, for he felt coal marketing opportunities would be greater there. By 1875, he was in Columbus, where he was president of a nearby coal mining company.

Prosperity had a way of eluding Williams, so he took a job as a special agent of the U.S. Treasury Department. For a time, he resided in New York, then Philadelphia, while he was investigating irregularities, principally in the customs

service. Some of his investigations revealed that people in high places engaged in questionable practices. By June 1881, he had been transferred to Tucson to continue his work as a special agent. While he was in Tucson, he became interested in promoting and developing copper and silver mines. One particular venture, a Columbia Copper Company, held title to several silver-copper claims in the Santa Rita Mountains, south of Tucson.

Williams found Tucson much to his liking and, contemplating permanent residency in Arizona, he sought the appointment as Secretary of the Territory of Arizona. Numerous letters were written; he addressed Congressman William McKinley of Ohio and ex-President Grant, but he was passed by. In September 1882, he resigned from government service, expecting to make more money in mining promotions. Again, Williams was disap-

pointed, for anticipated funds from the Washington, D.C., investors for developing the Columbia Copper enterprise failed to materialize. Later he wrote, "I have never been so shamefully treated in my life, as by those in Washington who were associated with me in those companies."

Already he had considered California as a residence and, while he was still in Tucson, his wife and children, Edith Bea and Henry L. Williams, Jr., moved to Santa Barbara, where Henry joined them around the end of February 1883.

\$16.20 Acre

Probably some arrangements had been made in advance of his arrival, and it was only a relatively few weeks before he acquired Rancho Ortega. Compared with today's prices, the ranch at \$16.20 an acre was a real bargain, but the immediate problem of raising \$17,000 reared its ugly head. Williams had lost about \$1,000, when Lord and Williams (no relation) failed in October 1881. Lord and Williams was a Tucson mercantile firm that also accepted deposits. And his proceeds anticipated from ore sales just before he left Tucson were less than expected. Williams gave Jacques a \$12,000 note and mortgage as part of the purchase, but the terms are unknown. However, soon after the purchase, he wrote, "I was never so pressed in my life for money and do not know which way to turn."

For health reasons, Sarah (Katie) Williams lived in Santa Barbara; in 1889, the Williams' residence was at the corner of De la Vina and Sola Streets. Henry built a ranch house on the west side of Ortega Hill, near the lower end of today's Sheffield Drive. Communication between Henry and Sarah was constant; they would drive in or out to see each other

Left: H. L. Williams, founder of Summerland.



and frequently would be together in the same house.

All kinds of crops were produced on Rancho Ortega. The former owners ran 70 head of cattle, including one bull, on the ranch; these came with the sale, but the new owner soon disposed of them as he wanted to raise pigs, even though he admitted he knew nothing about swine. He soon learned that his pig inventory could make wild swings, usually downward. For example, on January 12, 1884, he counted 520 pigs. Some weeks later, after a heavy, continuous rain that dropped 20 inches in 23 days (his measurement), Williams had lost about 100 pigs. The same storm made off with fences and washed out the lemon orchard.

Sewing Bean Sacks

Eight men usually worked with H. L. Williams six days a week. The crops included barley, flax, corn, small white beans, bayo beans, and Egyptian wheat. Williams usually worked like everyone else, but, from time to time, he would ride over his land; "I took a general oversight," was his expression.

It was well he did, for while some people paid for pasturing their animals on his land, others simply deposited them without notice, in which case they received a sharp note. Much of the initial effort in organizing the ranch was devoted to stringing wire on new fence posts purchased from Charles Pierce, the lumber dealer in Santa Barbara. H. L. Williams' parents also settled in Santa Barbara and even his 68-year-old father pitched in by drying apricots, while his mother and Aunt Eliza sewed bean sacks.

The ranch was spread over six hills with names often suggested by their crops: Ortega, White Bean, Flax, Top

Not, Wood Pile, and Century Plant. Ortega was the lowest at 195 feet, while Top Not was the highest at 524 feet.

From time to time, Williams sold or traded his farm produce and livestock to other ranchers, as well as feed stores. For example, Kinton Stevens, by now a Montecito nurseryman, wanted to buy 15-inch olive tree cuttings from Williams' trees. The deal was made and Stevens bought 7,855 cuttings, for which he paid one-half cent each or \$39.27. The only trouble with the transaction, from Williams' cash viewpoint, was that he fancied Stevens' bay mare, which he rode home after parting with \$50.

The financial pinch continued. In April 1884, Williams borrowed \$600 from rancher J. W. Cooper to pay Jacques the interest due on the note. Another time, Williams paid interest due several vendors but, on the same day, had to borrow \$80 from banker Milo Sawyer.

Early in 1885, H. L. Williams sold some 150 hogs to Joseph Tognazzi of Las Cruces Ranch at five cents a pound. Williams also provided two men to help drive the herd to the ranch beyond Gaviota. With the total weighing 14,163 pounds, Williams pocketed a welcome \$708.15.

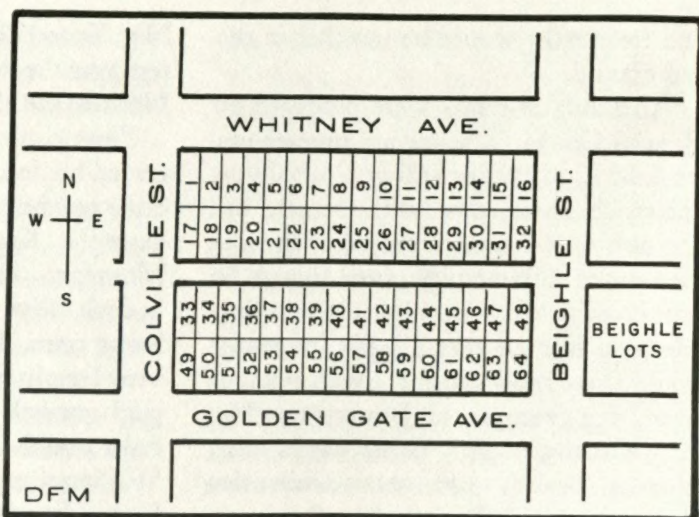
Sigh of Relief

Williams was on an economic treadmill, as he financed and refinanced his ranch and improvements. One can picture his sigh of relief, when Dr. E. W. Crooks of Santa Barbara bought 917.7 acres of the ranch (all of the land north of the stage road) for \$65,000 (later increased to \$75,000) on October 12, 1885. Dr. Crooks was acting as agent for unidentified parties in West Virginia and was to receive a tidy commission of \$15,000.

Reading between the lines of his journal, there were some hurdles to be surmounted before the sale was complete. Williams went to San Francisco on the steamer *Santa Rosa*, but came back with unsatisfactory results. He soon returned to the Bay City, this time with Dr. Crooks, but things continued to go badly. Eventually, the negotiations were terminated and seven months later, Williams had the ranch back on his hands.

Pigs And Mortgages

During the fall of 1885, Dr. Crooks agreed to purchase the remainder of Williams' hogs, about 600 to 700, for \$1,250. When it came time to deliver, Williams had a difficult time securing men to round up the elusive animals, so he counter-offered with 250 pigs at a much lower price. More mortgages were made and refinanced. In March 1887, his debts had grown so, he needed a larger loan than before; this time he mortgaged the ranch for \$35,000 with the San Francisco Savings Union. During this time, the Southern Pacific Railroad was building along the coast and would soon be grading across Rancho Ortega on its way to Santa Barbara. Southern California was going through a land boom which the McAfee Brothers, a San Francisco partnership, recognized. On August 17, 1887, two days before the first passenger train pulled into Santa Barbara, an agreement was made, whereby Williams would set aside 100 acres for a townsite. The partnership had just one year to subdivide the acreage and was to

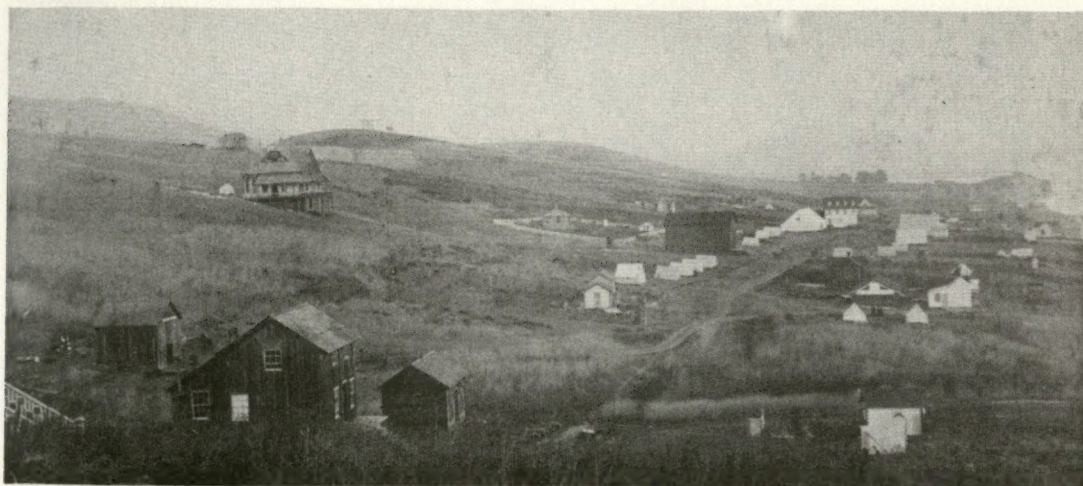


The typical block in Summerland contained 64 lots, numbered in this configuration, using Block 12, shown above, as an example. Each lot measured 25 by 60 feet and this block was 400 feet long.

Colville and Beighle streets were probably named for residents of San Francisco who purchased some lots. W. J. Colville's lots were in Block 42, at the foot of the street bearing his name. Mrs. Dr. Nellie Beighle, a San Francisco physician, purchased six lots in the adjoining block (Block 13) but, during the summer of 1890, she exchanged these lots for the same number in Block 30. Beighle Street is now called Valencia Road.

remit \$300 to Williams for each acre sold. Somehow, this fine idea did not materialize.

Spiritualism played a major role in the first decade of the history of Summerland. During their marriage, Sarah introduced the mystic science to Henry who, at first a skeptic, began to be more interested. In May 1882, while still in Tucson, he wrote a letter to his deceased brother, Charley, saying that he was "looking some lately into spiritualism" and was trying to communicate with



The beginnings of Summerland. Note the tents running along Lillie Avenue, used both by Spiritualist conventioners and settlers waiting for their homes to be built. Evelina Hotel is the three-storied building immediately to the right of the large tent. The house on stilts at left belonged to Galen Clark.

him. A similar letter was written to his maternal grandfather, but the form of reply, if any, was not recorded. Within a few years, H. L. Williams had sufficient experience to join the cause and then contemplated the beautiful possibilities of living in a Spiritualist community.

Summerland Platted

Plans for the colony grew so that before the end of 1888 the new settlement was widely advertised. Called "Summerland," the townsite plat was filed December 18, 1888.¹ It was drawn by John K. Harrington, a young surveyor from Mississippi, who later took part in the early operations of Hope Ranch. Reflecting a prominent name in Santa Barbara also interested in Spiritualism, one of the streets was named "Hollister." Sarah was not able to witness this event, for she had died ten days earlier after a year of bed confinement.

The new town, on the east side of Ortega Hill, extended from the crest of an adjoining hill down a slope to the edge of

a low bluff overlooking the beach. The townsite consisted of some 150 acres extending along the shoreline for about 3,600 feet and occupied about one-seventh of the ranch. Not all of the 43 blocks were the same size, but a typical block measured 250 by 400 feet and, bisected by an alley, contained 64 lots. The lots measured only 25 by 60 feet. According to one later observer, most of the purchasers were expected to be those attending the Spiritualist meetings, and so would be temporary residents. Therefore, a small lot would be adequate for their tents. However, most people found it expedient to purchase three or four lots for a home site. Some larger blocks were divided into 112 lots. Williams sold the lots at \$25 each and was noted for his generosity and kindness in dealing with purchasers.

About the time the railroad built through the ranch in 1887, the station of Ortega, about a mile east of Summerland, was established. A townsite of the same name, located half on the Ortega Ranch and half on the adjoining lands of Anna



An early view of Summerland, looking west. The B. M. Bussey house or "Cliff Cottage" is on the bluff to the left.

C. Greenwell, had been platted, but was never developed.

According to an erroneous report in a San Francisco newspaper, one-third of the 2,500 lots had been sold by the time the Summerland plat was recorded. Actually, Williams sold about one-tenth of the lots in December 1888.

The site was attractive, for almost every lot had a sweeping view of the Pacific Ocean with the Channel Islands as the

backdrop. A group of Spiritualists came from Los Angeles to inspect the new site and were so favorably impressed that some members purchased 27 lots.

As 1889 progressed, Summerland became more tangible. At the end of March, the town had eleven residents. Three families lived in as many houses, while two were still in tents, although lumber was being delivered for two additional homes. Pipe and machinery for the waterworks was also arriving.

On Sunday, May 12, 1889, the new Spiritualist colony was dedicated. Some of the Los Angeles and Santa Monica visitors had sent their tents and cots in advance, but Williams was scurrying around Santa Barbara trying to find more cots. About 500 people were on hand for the weekend event, including two dozen from San Francisco and a number from Santa Barbara, who responded to a general invitation. Saturday was set aside for inspecting the townsite and perhaps buying lots, while services and lectures were held on Sunday.

The Summerland Free Library Association, after raising nearly all of the \$2,000 needed for a library structure, engaged an



The Galen Clark house today. Clark, discoverer of the Mariposa big trees and guardian of the Yosemite Valley for 20 years, had a ranch in what is present day Wawona. He came to Summerland in 1891 where he eventually bought up 28 lots. He died in San Francisco in 1910 at age 96. (Photo: David F. Myrick)

architect to design it. The postal service established a post office on September 14, but the first sack of mail was not delivered to Summerland until nearly a month had elapsed. On October 11, Southern Pacific recognized Summerland as a station where trains would stop on a "flag" signal. No station building was to be erected until sometime later.

Five Barrels A Day

Though not occurring in the town, significant news was reported late in November 1889, advising that Occidental Petroleum had pushed its tunnel far enough in Oil Spring Canyon to strike oil. It was not a large yield, measuring only five barrels daily, but the lessees were pleased. Summerland residents, recalled the 1877 oil project at the foot of Ortega Hill, noted this event and probably wondered about their future.

After the founding and dedication of Summerland, the next most important event of the year was the town's first wedding. The principals were none other than Henry L. Williams and Mrs. Agnes Strickland Morgan. As a widow, she had lived in the area for several years and was a niece of an English historian, Agnes Strickland, as well as a member of a noble English family. Rev. Philip S. Thacher of the Unity Church in Santa Barbara performed the ceremony on September 10, 1889, at the home of Mrs. Olive K. Smith, and every man, woman and child of Summerland were present. After the reception, the couple went to Santa Barbara, where they boarded the *Santa Rosa* and went to San Francisco for their honeymoon. On their return, they lived near Summerland.

Summerland's growth during its first year was hailed as "remarkable," particu-

larly when a number of other settlements laid out in the 1887 boom had been abandoned. In Santa Barbara County, Summerland is one of the few towns extant today which was formed after the arrival of the railroad in 1887.

At the beginning of 1890, there were eighteen buildings and contracts had been let for another fifteen. The cost of individual structures, certainly modest by today's standards, ranged from \$500 to \$2,000 and one unidentified place cost all of \$4,000!

The slow pace of lot sales added to Williams' money problems. Some financial assistance came in January 1890 when Mary A. Ashley, a Santa Barbara widow with considerable real estate holdings, advanced Williams \$5,000 in exchange for title to all unsold lots. Under this arrangement, both the Williams and Ashley names appeared on deeds as grantors and the sale proceeds were applied to the money advanced to Williams. The agreement was terminated by May 1891.

Natural Gas Discovered

By this time, Summerland had a store, post office and a school was projected. Further progress came to the town on June 17, 1890, when the first of a string of weekly newspapers made its appearance. Called the *Reconstructor*, its editor was James S. Loveland, a 72-year-old former newspaperman, teacher and Spiritualist lecturer. The initial issues were printed elsewhere, until the paper secured its own press. But the highpoint of the year was the discovery of natural gas which, for a time, held out great promise for the future of Summerland.

In the town, nothing would grow on a particular spot about 20 feet in diameter. About June 16, 1890, a man whose name



The essentials of civilized living came to Summerland early on. These included a post office, grocery store, laundry, and Fred the Barber.

was lost to posterity drilled here, fully expecting to tap hot sulphur water. After penetrating the soil for only a few inches, he was surprised by the strong smell of gas. Continuing his drilling, the man hit a pocket of gas, which he lit and allowed to burn through the night. Four days later, the well, further deepened, encountered a larger volume of gas which announced itself with a great roar. Again the flowing gas was lighted, which produced a stellar flame eight to twelve feet high and about three feet wide at the top. Subsequently, it was remarked that, for at least twenty years, there had always been a strong gas smell at this location.

Gas Plumes At Night

There was much excitement in Summerland and Santa Barbara, for this was the first time a gas field had been located. Large crowds on Stearns Wharf in Santa Barbara observed the gas plume on selected nights. Within a few weeks, part of the gas was captured and piped to the new Evelina Hotel in Summerland for lighting and cooking. Local engineers made tests and attempted to calculate the

output and reserves. Some people anticipated that the Summerland wells would equal the production of the celebrated Stockton, California, gas wells. Unlike the shallow Summerland wells, those at Stockton were 1,200 feet deep, with the most productive at 2,000 feet.

The advantages of a cheap and readily available source of fuel were quickly recognized. Santa Barbara men formed a syndicate to lease the Ortega Ranch from H. L. Williams to extract gas, oil and minerals. Signed July 24, 1890, the lease ran for ten years with an option to renew and included the existing gas well, where the syndicate was to sink a 15-inch pipe. The syndicate included oilman W. C. Cook, clothing merchant C. H. Frink and E. W. Gaty, whose varied career included mayoralty of Santa Barbara and joint operation of the Arlington Hotel.

Under the lease agreement, Summerland held top priority in the allocation of gas, but after meeting the town's needs for illumination and domestic and manufacturing needs (there was a prospect of a pottery factory coming to Summerland), the surplus could be piped to Santa Barbara.

Drilling of the big well continued. On

August 5, the drill hit a crevice, which sparked wild rumors. The next week, when the well was down 39 feet, the drill had difficulty forcing its way through the stiff blue clay. All this time, there was a boiling sound and a strong smell, as gas worked its way through this mass.

About 11:30 on the morning of August 14, 1890, the drill punctured a gas reservoir at 49 feet. There was a terrible rumbling, at which point the well drillers, Ed and Charley Mosher, took to their heels, but not fast enough to escape a thorough drenching, as mud, tools and water were hurled 40 feet in the air.

Excitement Far And Wide

The news reached Santa Barbara by the noon train, which was passing the site when the activity was on full display. People took coaches or waited until the four o'clock train could carry them to Summerland. One uninformed observer declared that this was the largest gas flow found west of the Mississippi. Efforts to

cap the well were without success, so the gas was allowed to flow all night until it was capped the next day.

Though under control, the gas pressure continued to be strong, and to promote Summerland and eradicate some of the jocular remarks about the Spiritualist colony, i.e. "Spookville," the gas torch was set ablaze at night for hundreds on Stearns Wharf to stare at in disbelief. Southern Pacific trains did a rushing business, as spectators converged on Summerland; on one Sunday, several hundred came to inspect the town.

The news excited people far and wide. Newspaper editors in Los Angeles and San Francisco, well aware that inexpensive fuel would burgeon their cities, all but commanded that pipelines be built and that every cubic foot of gas be delivered to their communities.

And, not unexpectedly, others rushed in to file mining claims along the beach, presumably between the high and low tide lines. As the notices were placed above the high water line, these postings

Typical early cable tool drilling rig. The tripod derrick supported the tools in the hole and steam provided the power.



were on H. L. Williams' land, so with the advice of counsel, he tore up all the illegal markings. As many of the locators were inexperienced in such matters, most claim descriptions were delightfully vague and nearly all claimants failed to file with E. W. Gaty, the secretary of the El Montecito Oil and Mining District, which included this area.

The syndicate responded promptly by securing an injunction and, on August 20, Sheriff R. L. Broughton took the train to Summerland to serve the locators. One individual had already set up a derrick and commenced drilling, but as he was trespassing on the Ortega Ranch, he had to pack up and go.

New Arrivals

H. L. Williams filed location notices in the same area but, as some operators were claimants to certain tidelands before him, they insisted that Williams was trying to jump their claims. At this particular time, the surf was unusually high, making it difficult to operate on the beach. One well was said to be down 40 feet and reportedly had entered the blue clay, a favorable indication of nearby gas fields, but in this case, apparently unproductive. Elsewhere, as on Burton Mound at the foot of Chapala Street in Santa Barbara, wells were sunk, but without success.

In September 1890, the men behind the gas syndicate formed the Summerland Gas Company, with E. W. Gaty as general manager and secretary, and transferred their lease to the new company.

In the spring of 1890, several new fam-



The W. H. Hancocks operated their store next to Liberty Hall in the early 1890's.

ilies converged on Summerland. These included Dr. Edward T. Balch, with his wife and son. For \$1,325, they purchased a five-acre parcel (Tract No. 97), where they built a \$2,500 house. This was the third house built on one of the larger lot subdivisions of H. L. Williams.

Concurrently, C. C. Vance, a former Kansas state senator, bought a cluster of lots, but rented a "temporary house" until his could be erected. From Washington, D.C., came Mrs. Martha A. Turpen, destined to try a new life in the Far West. Mrs. Priere sold her house to the ex-Washington lady and then lived in a tent pending construction of another house. Another newcomer was J. E. Ellis, who took over the management of the Evelina Hotel, with the assistance of his family for a time, before turning the responsibility over to Ted P. Shaw.

These new settlers were some of the people who watched the Summerland Gas Company put down more wells. One night, three lighted gas wells brilliantly illuminated the embryonic town. Just how much gas really existed was impossible to measure properly in those days, but the Summerland Gas Company

made an enticing offer to Santa Barbara investors. Although the stock had a par value of \$5 a share, local people were given the opportunity to purchase prescribed amounts of shares from different blocks. The cost of shares in the first block was 50 cents; the price rose so that shares in the last group of 120,000 shares (boosted to 200,000 shares) was priced at par (\$5).

In an effort to stir up interest in the company, Santa Barbara "capitalists" were invited to inspect the gas wells and some 60 men came down by train. The large pavilion, used for Spiritualists' meetings, was brightly lighted with four gas burners. Outside, other wells brought "day-light" to Summerland. The gas company's wells, now five in number, were close together and were from 45 to 185 feet deep. At that time, two more wells, located a little distance away, were being drilled as speculations and, within days, both hit gas. The district continued to expand as James R. Heath began drilling some 200 feet west of this cluster of wells.

Drilling In The Streets

During October 1890, while H. L. Williams presided over a meeting of Spiritualists lasting almost two weeks, discontent began fomenting, because some of the gas wells were drilled on town streets. So the unhappy people, meeting on Saturday, November 1, drafted a resolution protesting the usurpation of town streets for commercial well sites. Nothing transpired from this protest, so in February 1891, a committee of seven was appointed to meet with the gas company, with the result that these representatives returned fully convinced that H. L. Williams had the right to lease the streets for gas wells. However, Williams also promised to transfer his royalty rights to three

trustees, to be used to benefit the town when it was large enough to incorporate.

Responsive to these protests, H. L. Williams withdrew drilling rights in the townsite areas from the clutches of the syndicate and the Summerland Gas Company. By a supplementary agreement of April 9, 1891, the syndicate agreed "to vacate and release from the operation of said lease and surrender the occupancy of certain portions of the Rancho." The syndicate held a hard line in negotiations; Williams had to pay them \$1,500, and being "temporarily short of funds," this took the form of a one-year 6% note, thus adding to his debts.

Darling's Best

Settlement satisfactory to everyone was not possible, because of individual matters. Back in the early part of 1891, the local paper adopted a new name, *The Summerland*, and an early issue reported that Warren Darling had sunk his own well on his lots in Block 25 at the west end of Lillie Avenue and found gas at 85 feet. The Darling family had arrived in town in the spring of 1890, with Stuart and J. Warren being the most active of the sons. Born in Michigan, they had spent five years in the lumber trade in Washington before coming to Summerland.

It was said that Darling's well yielded the best flow of gas in the area. This success prompted the gas company to invade Darling's territory by drilling a well in the adjoining street. As this would have reduced the output of his well, Darling did not take kindly to this intrusion. Claiming that his ownership reached to the middle of the street, Darling filed suit in April 1891, but it appears that an amicable settlement was made without a trial,

in part thanks to the amended agreement with the syndicate. One month later, Williams sold six more lots in Block 25 to Darling at the original low price, this time at the corner of Evans and Banner streets. Not only did Darling pipe gas into his own home for lighting and cooking, but he subsequently supplied natural gas to the surrounding neighbors.

Other lot owners drilled wells in Summerland; W. H. Meginness had several wells on his Lillie Avenue lots. A group of young men, desiring to play baseball after sunset, tapped the gas reservoir underlying the same street for evening illumination. The process was elementary: some short pieces of pipe were driven into the ground and when the smell of gas was evident, matches were applied and the torches sprang into life. At the end of the game, it was easy to snuff out the flames.



Another use of natural gas which would have boosted the growth of Summerland was the proposed relocation of the Santa Barbara electrical generating works. The superintendent, using coal imported from Australia, was favorably impressed with the low cost fuel of Summerland. That move never came about; in fact, news about the great natural gas

fields abated in 1892, which suggests that the supply was indeed limited. However, Summerland managed to generate news stories of a different sort.

Trial for Slander

In March 1892, the trial of H. L. Williams vs. E. T. Slight began. Williams sought \$32,000 damages from Slight for slander. According to the plaintiff, Slight was not only trying to ruin him financially, but also to drive him out of town. Prior to 1891, when the trouble began, Williams sold many lots. In December 1888, 287 were deeded; 564 were sold in 1889, and the first nine months of 1890 saw 342 lots purchased. For the last quarter of that year, only 60 parcels were sold and that included 48 sold during a camp meeting. From there on, the situation worsened; sales fell to 119 in 1891 and not a single lot was sold in the first part of 1892, although there were still 1,100 lots available.

Williams contended that the trouble resulted from Slight's "persistent and malicious attacks" which began in 1890. Slight headed a group unhappy about leasing the streets for gas wells and even more upset by being charged for water, when previously it had been pumped without cost to the settlers.

Slight was from Watsonville and first visited the area in 1870. Responding to an advertisement in a San Francisco newspaper in 1888, Slight bought 24 lots, but did not come to see them until February 1890. Ironically, his purchase on December 17, 1888, was the first consummated.

Slight entertained the courtroom—even the judge laughed—as he employed his witty style in supporting his contentions about the promise of free water, etc., but the jury found for the plaintiff and



Old-time Summerland still lives on in the Big Yellow House restaurant. This is how George Becker's home appeared before he remodelled it to give the building its modern appearance.

awarded Williams \$500. On the first ballot, some of the jurors voted to give Williams considerably more, before settling on the lower figure.

It might be noted that one of the witnesses appearing for Williams was J. W. Darling and there were other similar lawsuits in which Slight was a defendant.

One of the unresolved mysteries of Summerland's history is the use of the large area on the hillside reserved for the Spiritualist Temple, in contrast with the location of the constructed temple in the business section below.

The Downtown Temple

H. L. Williams, in laying out the town in 1888, set aside the temple site at Golden Gate Avenue and Temple Street. *The Morning Press* of March 24, 1892, carried the announcement that the cornerstone of the Summerland temple would

be laid on Thursday, March 31, at which time the 44th anniversary of the founding of modern Spiritualism also would be celebrated. No address was provided and there was no reporting of the celebration. However, as the Spiritualist Temple for some time was situated on Evans Street, between Wallace and Harding streets, presumably this was the site of the celebration.

More prospects for town progress came in August 1892, when H. L. Williams petitioned the county Board of Supervisors for a franchise for an interurban railroad between Santa Barbara and Summerland via Montecito to accommodate the "areas rapidly being populated." No electric car line was ever completed east of the Santa Barbara city limits, but in November 1895, electric trolley poles stretched most of the way to Summerland, where a site had been selected for a powerhouse.²

As previously mentioned, Henry L. Williams' house was on the west side of Ortega Hill, near the lower part of today's Sheffield Drive, close to Romero Creek. Just after Christmas 1892, Mrs. Williams was almost fatally burned. Some children had been burning small fires in the yard near the house and, not realizing that her dress had caught fire, Mrs. Williams walked some distance before trying to extinguish the flames with her hands. As this was ineffective, she then rolled on the ground, which spread the fire to surrounding twigs and dry grass. She then had the presence of mind to throw herself into Romero Creek; the flames quickly vanished and she soon recovered.

The year 1893 was economically difficult for the nation and troublesome for Summerland. For one thing, there were more libel suits and a perilous fire in June. Two sisters, Mrs. Julia Figler and Mrs. Olive K. Smith, barely escaped with their lives when the latter's house, fronting on Morris Place, was swept by flames. Possibly the fire was the work of an arsonist; Mrs. Smith had previously received a letter, which is summarized as follows:

Madam—I advise you, if you do not leave this community, you will wish you had. This is from one who knows whereof they speak. This is no idle threat. s/Your Would-Be Friend.

There were no follow-up reports and the ladies remained in Summerland.

The town had entered a two-year period of dull times. Houses were begging for tenants, grass was taking over some streets, people were discouraged about the future, and several of the early settlers drifted away. But a new era was about to take over and change Summerland, and,

with subsequent events, the place would become known world-wide.

Oil discoveries in 1894 brought many changes to Summerland. The presence of oil in the area had been confirmed in 1877, but the amounts were so small that further work was discouraged.

When H. L. Williams acquired Rancho Ortega in 1883, he was aware of the previous oil workings on his property. Among his letters in May of that year was a summary of the activities of the Santa Barbara Oil Company in Oil Spring Canyon.

In the following year, Williams went to see José Lorenzana of Montecito and it was agreed that the latter would locate oil at his expense on Rancho Ortega and would receive one-third of the oil production. The next day, February 27, 1884, the two men met in Santa Barbara and signed an agreement. Lorenzana was to begin work at once. Meeting on the ranch the following afternoon, Lorenzana pointed out the location of the hidden oil spring "at the mouth of the canyon which runs past the lower end of the field below Antonio's house [a resident worker] or from the stone culvert," as Williams wrote in his journal.

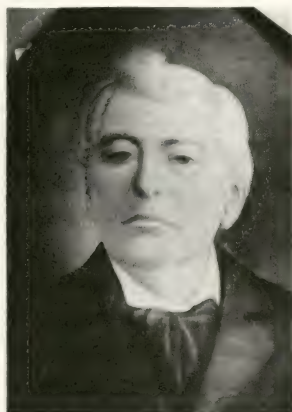
Though committed to develop oil from the alleged spring, Lorenzana found it more convenient not to appear at the ranch. Finally, on August 19, Williams hired a man named Pool to dig for oil by driving an adit (tunnel) in the hill below Antonio's house. After eight days work with no encouraging signs, Pool was assigned other ranch work.

The next month, Williams terminated his contract with Lorenzana and went to Santa Barbara to have his "oil location re-recorded or rather left with Recorder Stoddard for the record."

A few nights later, Williams and

Román Villalba. He and his brother, Rafael, came to California during the Gold Rush and later turned to ranching in the Serena area.

[Carpinteria Valley Historical Society]



Camarillo, a ranch hand, got up at midnight to sink a box at low tide to indicate the location of his claim. Not surprisingly, the box was found high and dry on the shore the next day, so Williams sunk the same box three feet down in tar-laden sand and "some considerable oil seeped in."

On October 15, some days after locating his claim, Williams had a most interesting and surprising conversation with one Román Villalba, who had come to retrieve his stock and pay his pasturage bill of four dollars. Williams' journal of that day summarizes the very revealing conversation:

He also showed me the spot where the oil spring which José Lorenzana contracted to explore—said Lorenzana knew nothing about an oil spring and offered him \$500, if he would tell him where this was, he refused and showed it to me for nothing.

That seemed to end the search for oil until May 29, 1885, when Jerome, a man hired by Williams, began drilling a well on Ortega Hill. All kinds of problems were encountered in drilling, but, on October 5, when work was suspended, the well was down 237.5 feet.

As previously chronicled, this was the same period that Williams had contracted

with Dr. Crooks to sell most of his ranch. On December 4 and 7, almost the final entries in his journal, Williams wrote that he had resumed drilling. The absence of any public news would indicate that Williams gave up prospecting and devoted his energies to ranching and Spiritualism until the gas discoveries of 1890.

The Smith Cole Discovery

Undoubtedly, the various indications of oil were not forgotten, but nothing seems to have transpired until March 1894, when the second discovery developed Summerland into an important oil district.³

Accounts vary, but Smith L. Cole is usually credited as the instigator of the new wave of interest in the possibilities of petroleum under Summerland. As previously mentioned, the supplies of natural gas were insufficient for industrial use, but were adequate to provide lighting and heating for individual residences. Around the early part of 1894, Cole dug a four-foot shaft (well) to secure gas for his home. When the shaft was down about 70 feet, Cole decided that the side walls needed support with curbing. In an effort to push the curbing into the shaft, Cole added his own weight and went down with the curb to find oil seeping into the shaft. As the hole went deeper, the oil flow increased.

About two weeks later, Cole had the misfortune to tumble into his well. The fall of 45 feet injured him severely and prevented him from working for several weeks. Meanwhile, oil trickled into the shaft, now deepened to 90 feet, and soon a pool of oil over thirteen feet deep filled the shaft. Summerland oil was heavier than the Santa Paula product and could



View of Summerland taken from the east, around 1896. Note the growth of the settlement and the presence of oil derricks.

be used for thinning asphalt; perhaps this was a selling point, aiding Cole to dispose of about a dozen barrels at \$2 a barrel.

H. L. Williams' correspondence in the spring of 1894 indicates that his goals for Summerland had changed considerably. Writing to Lovell White, Cashier of the San Francisco Savings Union, about money problems on March 21, Williams stated in part:

I have had a big load of debt to carry. I started a town which invited a lot of cranks to it who have fought me in every way possible, until I have been forced to abandon the idea upon which the town was founded to get rid of them. The recent discovery of oil in the town is going to create some excitement and demand for lots and land, this with the early completion of the gap in the S. P. Ry. making or placing my property on its main line will enable me to pull out nicely within the next 18 months...

This opinion was confirmed in a letter written to a Spiritualist associate on April 14, in which he said, "Our oil developments are progressing very favorably and I think a few days more will make some important and valuable showings."

Other letters were written along the same vein. Williams' forecast came true on May 15, 1894, when the town was

seized with excitement with another oil discovery by Dwight Kempton and the Darling brothers. Using a three-inch casing, their well, located near the sanitarium in the center of town, tapped oil sands at 115 feet and, 25 feet further down, the oil itself. At that time, Kempton had a second occupation, for he was the editor and publisher of *The Nugget*, a weekly newspaper, which he had started in March.

In June, H. L. Williams began sinking a well on the beach; during the fall he added a second well and, in December, both were yielding oil in paying quantities. One report was that Williams had "the best oil yet found in Summerland."⁴

Still, not everyone viewed the Summerland oil boom positively. One comment, coming after Williams' big well was ready, was that there was no market for the oil. This had some merit, as pricing and marketing were challenges. In Santa Barbara, there were "calamity howlers," who invented a story that the Summerland oil had been imported and poured down the wells. This was utter nonsense, of course, as increasing production undermined that tale.

To combat these scurrilous remarks, a Board of Trade was formed with J. Warren Darling as its leader. Since their arrival in 1890, when the town consisted

of ten houses and 27 tents, the Darling brothers had taken an active part in the community. Their machine and blacksmith shop had followed the growth of local industry, and, having secured the right to manufacture the Atlas gas engine, they had built a number of these compact motors.

In January 1895, Williams told a reporter that there were seven producing wells in Summerland, notwithstanding that the lack of capital confined equipment to homemade, primitive tools. Still, 14 more wells were drilled, including three on the I. K. Fisher place just beyond the eastern boundary of the Ortega Ranch.

Storage of the oil, pending shipment, was a problem, but Williams relieved part of the difficulty by building a 250-gallon storage tank on the bluff above the railroad at the east end of Ortega Hill. The tank

was fed from his wells by a steam pump.

By February 1895, the cry of oil had roused everyone in the community, for there were now 25 wells in Summerland of which 15 were producing. Of the latter, two were owned by Fisher and two by Loomis. Cole, Fisk and Doulton each had one well. Williams had hit another bonanza at 62 feet to create another "sensation" and now had eight producers.

Williams, again willing to show off his community, invited members of the Santa Barbara Board of Trade to see the new oil town, so representatives boarded the April 30 morning train for Summerland. The story was one of success with shallow wells with oil rigs springing up along the railroad. On the Southern Pacific right of way itself, two long strips were leased to three Santa Barbara men: J. H. Austin, a railroad agent; H. J. Doulton, a wood and feed house proprietor,

The Darling brothers in front of their machine shop. From the left: Wayne Darling, Will McIntyre, Jerome Potter, J. Warren Darling, Stuart Darling, unknown. (Carpinteria Valley Historical Society)



and liveryman J. C. Wilson. Born in Vermont in 1849, Jerome C. Wilson deserves special mention.

He came to Santa Barbara in 1886 and operated the Olympic and Blackhawk stables. He sank his first well in Summerland in 1894 and participated in a number of petroleum ventures in the area. Wilson and the other two had three wells down and contemplated sinking another 21 wells on their lease.

Summerland took on a business appearance as lots changed hands rapidly and loaded tank cars stood on the new railroad siding, ready to be hauled away to consignees. Yet everyday life continued. The Literary and Debating Society held its weekly meetings on Sundays at the Ortega Cottage, and the Spiritualists continued to hold their annual camp meetings in the town. At this time, correspondent Rose L. Bushnell described her picturesque hillside town with its cottages and gardens. Some were perched on the highest point, others clung to the hillside, "while others are almost upon the shore, where the waves wash the beach in gentle ripples that kiss its feet with a never ceasing murmur, all its own."

Other businesses besides oil continued to spring up. The soap factory was enjoying a good trade. During the spring of 1896, a cigar factory began production; four months later, a second factory entered the trade. The Summerland Novelty Manufacturing Company was organized to manufacture folding bath tubs and other promoters promised a cannery in time for the next fruit season. Both dreams vanished as did the contents of the safe of the Summerland post office, which had been carefully drilled that summer in the first of several robberies of that government agency.

By the fall of 1895, the daily oil out-

put was around 400 barrels, but it was still a local business with limited capital and primitive equipment. Most wells were only 50 to 60 feet deep and none exceeded 150 feet. The investment required for these shallow wells was as little as \$200 or \$300. Some of the oil was retrieved by a bucket with an old-fashioned windlass; "but it works," was the comment.

A Marketing Solution

In those days, the demand for oil, both locally and nationwide, was still in its infancy. The first automobiles in Santa Barbara were five years away and the greatest hope for enlarged markets was the conversion of railroad locomotives from coal to oil. Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe had just converted their first locomotives to burn oil, but large scale changes were still some years away.

A step in the resolution of the marketing problem came with the first section of a two-part agreement with Easton, Eldridge and Company, an established San Francisco firm of real estate agents and auctioneers, to endeavor to find a market for the oil, an effort in which the Summerland Board of Trade cooperated.

The Board of Trade engaged in a number of projects. Since the filing of the townsite map, Williams had been selling Summerland lots at the standard price of \$25 each, but when oil was found, he jacked the price up to \$100. The Board of Trade, in an effort to encourage investors, arranged with Williams to offer 100 lots at \$75 during the month of October 1895, with an agreement for him to repurchase these particular lots at the same price if, within three years, the purchaser failed to find oil after drilling 1,000 feet.

Another Board project was a renewed effort to find promoters to build an electric railway from Santa Barbara to Summerland, where it would extend the entire length of Lillie Avenue and then continue to Carpinteria. Typical of promotional



Railroads were a great boon for the Summerland oil industry. Cars shown belong to the Pacific Coast Oil Company.

statements in newspapers of those days was that the electric road was not a prospect, "but an established fact." The "fact" was only a fantasy, but one dream of the Board of Trade that did come true was the Halloween Dance which it sponsored at Liberty Hall.

Optimism reigned at this time. It was stated that "Summerland was on the eve of an Oily Boom." Certainly there was more interest in the community; Southern Pacific's top officials made a special trip to Summerland, Williams took his uncommitted lots off the market and claim jumping along the beach was in vogue. The *Summerland Advance*, another journal, reflected the changes of the local petroleum industry in its columns. Drilling rigs arrived from Los Angeles and several corporations were formed with authorized capital ranging from a few thousand dollars (Wilson and Dou-

ton Oil Company) to \$100,000 (Kaiser Oil Company) or more. J. C. Wilson decided to cash in on his work by exchanging part of his interests for a business block in Philadelphia with Hill Fennel, an ex-Philadelphian living in Montecito.

At the end of 1895, there were 42 wells in Summerland and seven more drilling machines were at work. The oil fever had taken over the town.

"Keep Your Eye on Summerland"

Santa Barbara watched the progress of its neighbor and when Easton, Eldridge and Company established a branch office at 715 State Street in January 1896 to promote the sale of Summerland lots to the public at prices ranging from \$75 to \$150, the Santa Barbara *Daily Independent* carried the slogan, "Keep your eye on Summerland" over its masthead. After two months, this was changed to "Invest in Summerland Oil Lots—They Will Pay" and carried on for another month.

But the big question still clouding the future of Summerland was marketing its product at an adequate price. Williams felt that the Summerland prices could compete with wells in the Los Angeles Basin, where producers combined to hold field prices at 50 cents a 42-gallon barrel, which worked out to 95 cents delivered in San Francisco, the principal market. Williams foresaw a wharf in Summerland's future, where oil would be delivered by gravity flow from local storage tanks and placed aboard coastal steamers for the 20-cent haul to San Francisco which, competing with Los Angeles prices, left Summerland producers a margin of 24 cents over costs.

There were production problems in Summerland, however. Boring had been suspended on Williams' three deep wells,

NOTES ON SUMMERLAND MAP (See Page 88)

Even on a composite map, it is not possible to document all the changes Summerland has undergone during its first century. The townsite plat of 1888 forms the basis of the 1926 assessor's map which, with the addition of Sears Street, portrays the Summerland of today. While the general topography of the area is a gentle slope rising from the Pacific, there are deviations not shown on the map. A large arroyo blocks Golden Gate Avenue east of Beighle Street (Valencia Road) and a small valley running north along Evans Avenue, then turning west of Banner Avenue, inhibits through streets in that area.

The main resource used for building location was a 1976 private research project, "Historic Buildings of Summerland." Location of oil derrick wharves, 1902, was furnished by the 1907 Arnold report (USGS Bulletin 321). The last wharf vanished several decades ago.

The ravages of fire, windstorm and highway construction have obliterated many of the older buildings. The highway initially ran down the east side of Ortega Hill, along Wallace Avenue, and exited on the east along the former Southern Pacific right-of-way around East End Park.

In 1926, the highway was moved to the south side of Ortega Hill and a widened Lillie Avenue became the route for the three-lane highway through town. In 1951, the freeway was routed into its current location between Lillie Avenue and the railroad. This change resulted in the destruction of such historic structures as the Spiritualist Temple (Liberty Hall), the Darling Brothers' machine shop, the Hotel Summerland, and spelled the end of Wallace Avenue, which had previously shared the commercial district with Lillie Avenue.

The business district today is centered on Lillie Avenue. The oil wells had initially been confined between Wallace Avenue and the shoreline, although a few wells were located to the north around Beighle Street.

because they gathered too much water, which then required the installation of a casing. A broken rope halted work on Darling's and Turner's well of 440 feet and some mischievous individual dumped some scrap iron in I. K. Fisher's well. Then a winter storm toppled three derricks—over the years this happened several times—and a high tide filled one of Williams' beach wells with salt water. The same storm also washed away part of the bluff, which exposed oil leaks; oil could be scooped up with a shovel in some places. A strong smell left no doubt that natural gas was escaping from newly uncovered cracks in the earth.

C. A. Loomis, one of the oil pioneers, drilled a new well in Block 43 and W. M. S. Moore was working nearby in April. Gradually, the previously mentioned problems concerning Williams and the others were resolved, but a new problem of a different nature arose when D. C. Ashum, editor of the *Advance*, stole away one night. It was a marital difficulty that caused him to vanish, rather than the oft-repeated error of mixing personal funds with company funds. The weekly paper continued for a decade or so with W. H. Smith as editor and publisher, who combined the upstart *Courier* with his paper to become the Summer-

land *Advance-Courier* by 1898.

While "the word" was "Say Nothing, But Pump Oil," the advance in prices and acceptance in Santa Barbara of oil as a fuel source, brought smiles to the faces of Summerland oil men. Almost every day, tank wagons trekked down to Ortega Hill empty to return with oil. And the price of a dollar a barrel was a vast improvement over the 65-cent figure a year earlier. For some customers, the price was just a little too dear; the Santa Barbara Ice Company, with its plant on lower State Street, had been a consistent buyer of fuel for its steam boilers. The continued high prices, plus transportation expenses, started its management thinking, with the result that the ice company bought two lots in Summerland near William Forrester's tank. Next, they contracted with drillers for two wells and six weeks later, down about 190 feet, oil was found in both wells. The output, like most Summerland wells, was small, but the eleven barrels a day satisfied the ice company.

The year of 1897 was not a happy one for California oil producers, for prices fell sharply from the previous levels. Overproduction, combined with static markets, were the culprits.

The real squeeze had come in August 1896, when Los Angeles oil men garnered as little as 50 cents a barrel and, in some instances, only 40 cents a barrel for their oil. To boost prices, they combined forces and, effective September 15, agreed to stop pumping for 30 days.

In Summerland, the situation was better; oil men received 70 to 75 cents for their product, but recognizing that the Los Angeles situation affected the Summerland oil economy, they decided to band together, as 80% of their output was sold in outside markets.

J. G. McCall, a local oil driller, was

named agent for the Summerland area. If storage tanks were full, wells would be shut down, which as a practical matter, had to be done irrespective of price. Not all producers were willing to go along with this form of cartel. J. C. Wilson, who still retained a dominant position in Summerland, having sold only part of his holdings, said that he would continue to put down wells. He pointed out that



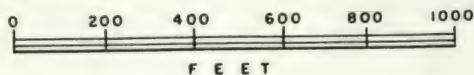
Top left: Jerome C. Wilson. He also bred horses and owned a San Fernando Valley farm. Top right: John B. Treadwell, who constructed the largest of Summerland's oil piers. Bottom left: Mining and oil entrepreneur Edwin P. Stevens (Carpinteria Valley Historical Society photo). Bottom right: The transplanted Englishman, Albert Hope-Doeg.

Los Angeles was the principal market for local producers and, to be competitive, local oil men had to absorb the 29-cent freight charge in setting their prices. Wilson said that he was willing to enter into any reasonable agreement, but would not be drawn into a trap "to bottle his oil while Los Angeles did all the selling."

It took a little less than three weeks for



SUMMERLAND

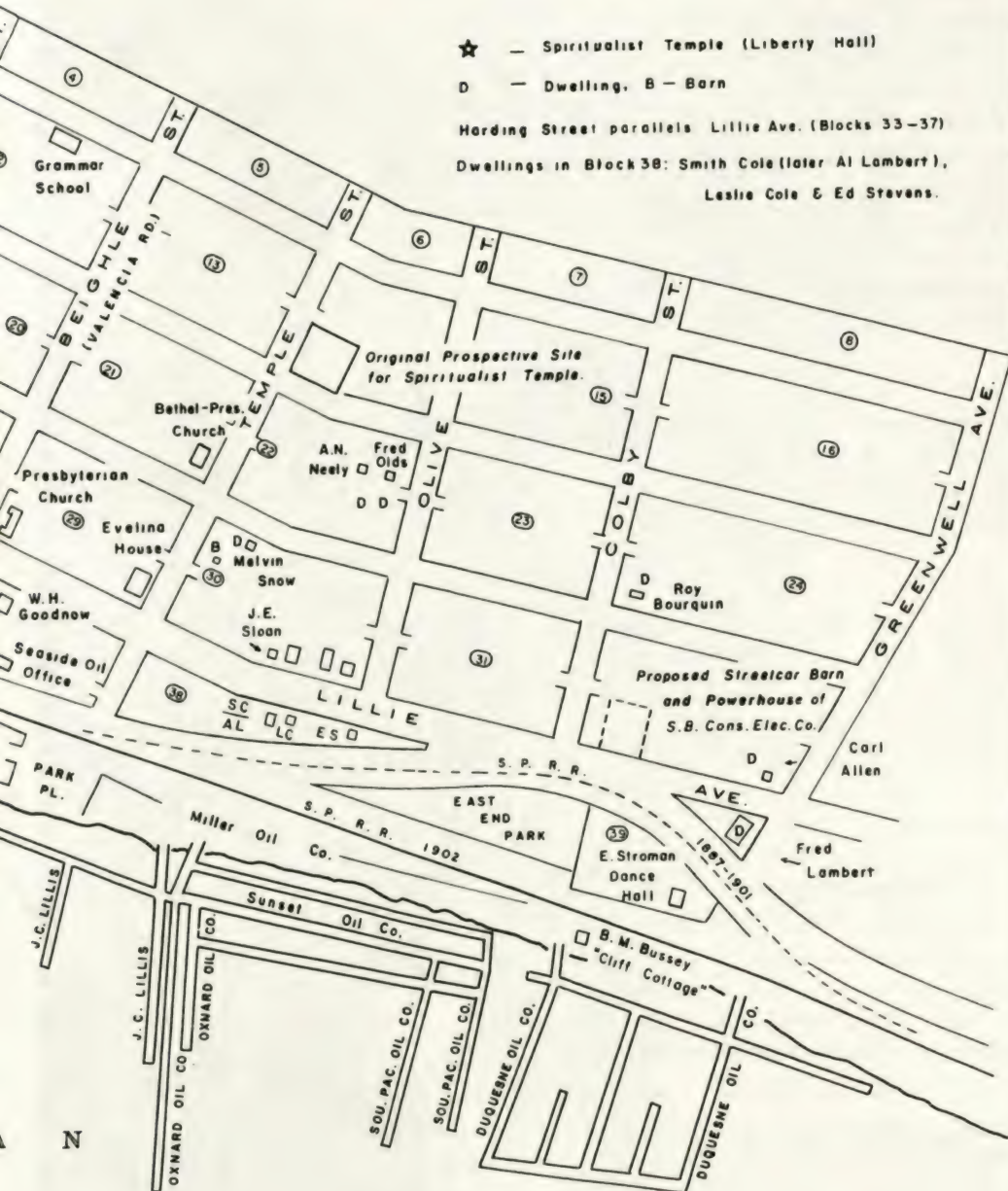


★ — Spiritualist Temple (Liberty Hall)

D — Dwelling, B — Barn

Harding Street parallels Lillie Ave. (Blocks 33-37)

Dwellings in Block 38: Smith Cole (later Al Lambert),
Leslie Cole & Ed Stevens.





The Summerland oil industry began to develop statewide markets in the mid-1890's. The number of drill sites continued to grow. Note the sharp curve of the railroad tracks, a condition eased in 1902.

the Los Angeles surplus to disappear and San Francisco users were beginning to call for oil. Pumping was resumed in Los Angeles on October 6, where the producers hoped to be able to hold out for a dollar. In Summerland, there were diverging opinions about price stabilization methods and the dollar figure failed to hold. Eventually, prices rose and, with expanded output from ocean drilling, prosperity returned.

Even with the depressed oil market, town improvements continued. The new Southern Pacific station opened just after Independence Day. The Santa Barbara Oil and Mining Company was incorporated. Even though W. M. S. Moore became president, the real power in the company belonged to S. W. Knapp. Knapp had come to California in 1896 to visit his mother and he stayed on to become a Carpinteria apricot rancher, and now, secretary and manager of the new company. The company purchased Lots 16 and 17 in Block 42 from Knapp. Knapp went on to become involved with the Sunset, Alliance and Eureka oil companies.

Within a few days, the Summerland Oil Development Company was formed by H. J. Doulton and others. Edwin P. Stevens, a transplant from Maine, put down a well for J. C. Lillis, formerly a Tacoma resident. J. C. Wilson, besides developing his own wells and operating his large livery stable in Santa Barbara, also drilled wells for others. In this summer of 1897, he sank three more wells on Colville Street for Albert Hope-Doeg, born in England, now living in Santa Barbara. In fact, now that there were eight

drilling rigs in operation, a new well was started in Summerland almost every day!

Early in August 1897, Summerland had a fire scare, when Ed Stevens decided to burn a barrel of waste oil not far from his wells, which were located under the bluff and near the beach. The trouble was that the fire had a mind of its own, choosing to follow the oil-soaked ground like a whirlwind. Before neighbors could pitch in and extinguish the fire by throwing sand on the flames, several scaffolds were burned, although the derricks were spared. Flames and dense smoke added excitement to that Sunday afternoon. The closing comment of *The Morning Press*, cognizant of low oil prices, said:

It is more probable than ever that if the bottom drops out of the market, other means will be devised of disposing of the local product. Mr. Stevens is still receiving congratulations.

Edwin Stevens had been one of the lucky prospectors in Arizona. He found a gold mine and sold it for a reported \$40,000, which provided a nest egg for his next venture. Coming to Santa Barbara, he went into contracting as Clark and Stevens and erected an oil storage tank for C. A. Loomis, the first in Summerland. In 1896, his firm purchased the oil property from William Forrester and J. B. Treadwell and operated it as the Coast Oil Company, which they reorganized as the Sunset Oil Company in July 1899.

John B. Treadwell

In September 1897, John B. Treadwell (1846-1931), manager of the Keystone Consolidated Mine at Amador City in the Mother Lode, registered at the Arlington

Hotel in Santa Barbara. Like some others, he was a pioneer in the Summerland district, sold out and returned a year later. Treadwell, born in Maine, served as a drummer boy in the Civil War, then studied engineering and became associated with the Comstock Kings and Lucky Baldwin. He was also active in the Jerome, Arizona, mines and took part in the development of the Southern Pacific Company oil reserves. According to his biographical sketch, he was responsible for changing the locomotive fuel on Southern Pacific from coal to oil. When this was announced in September 1897, after some experimentation, local oil producers were delighted.

Treadwell, though not connected with the family involved with the famous gold mines in Alaska, was widely known in California mining and petroleum circles and would leave his mark on Summerland. Later, he would become involved in the Kern County oil fields and would establish Forest Lawn Cemetery in Los Angeles.

In Summerland, wells continued to be added to the already long list, badly needed storage tanks were erected and Warren Darling was adding on to his house on the hill. There was a Grand Masked Ball at Liberty Hall, adding a different type of excitement to the community. In the corporate world, H. L. Williams, Jr., J. G. McCall and others founded the Enterprise Oil and Mining Company.

When 1898 began, there were fears of litigation concerning the rights for use of the beach front, which in some opinions, was the most desirable area to search for oil. J. B. Treadwell and Judge W. N. Roberts of Goleta formed a partnership and began drilling for oil from their tidal platforms, which invited conflict with others who held the franchise rights, such

as H. L. Williams' wharf franchise, which was to be transferred to the Enterprise Oil venture of his son. Others claimed ownership by one means or another, but there were no immediate repercussions.

Street Fighting

The street scene was different. Now that the spirit of Christmas was receding, street fighting returned. One scrap involved money, but the other involved a pretty girl with two suitors. One young man had taken another's best girl for a ride in his buggy; in desperation, the man with wounded pride pulled his rival from the buggy "and wiped the earth with him." No arrests were made, however.

In the legal columns of the *Press*, a "Notice of Appl. for Franchise" appeared for many weeks. It read:

John B. Treadwell. April 4, 1898. To build wharf from point opposite Cary Place in Town of Summerland, right to take tolls for 20 years and to construct a continuation of said wharf as a bridge (20 feet wide) over Cary Place to southerly line of Railroad Avenue in Summerland. Filed January 8, 1898.

Distribution of its output was a continuing problem for the Summerland district. Without a supply of railroad tank cars to take the oil to distant markets, there was nothing to do but to shut down the pumps when the storage tanks were full. Southern Pacific, not unmindful of its shippers, installed a steam coil in oil tanks to facilitate the flow of oil during the cold winter mornings.

The need for new markets was always there, so when the new sugar factory of Henry T. Oxnard was in the planning



The Southern Pacific depot, at center. The dark building immediately to the right of the depot is the Spiritualist Temple on Wallace Avenue.
[Photo: California State Library]

stages in the fall of 1897, it became a matter of importance. However, the stiff terms suggested by the purchasing agent diminished the interest of Summerland oil men.

During these times, H. L. Williams was quietly expanding his oil interests, but was concerned about his future as his health was failing. As a means to put his affairs in proper order, he joined some Los Angeles men in the formation of the Summerland Oil and Mining Company on January 17, 1898, and then transferred all his remaining rights to the townsite, Ortega Ranch, oil wells, etc., to the new company. H. L. Williams was to be president at a salary of \$550 per month.

A Gold Mine

Little has been said about this company's activities, but shortly after its creation, it was revealed that it would develop a gold mine on the ranch. The gold vein was said to be 40 feet wide and, unlike another gold vein running parallel to the shore, this ran at right angles. The ore as-

sayed \$5 to the ton, which under mining methods available at that time, would have been a marginal or perhaps even a losing proposition. Maybe a second assay was less attractive, but in any event, the gold venture faded away.

Under the terms of the conveyance, the new company had to be productive within a limited time but, before its deep well could tap an oil pool, the contract expired.

J. C. Wilson, as he had done previously, exchanged more of his oil property for real estate, this time choosing Detroit property. A quiet event was the organization of the Seaside Oil Company on February 19, 1898; it later became a major institution in Summerland. The new venture hardly created a ripple, while of more immediate interest was the dispatching of 60 railroad tank cars with 8,000 barrels of Summerland oil in the month of February.

Speculation about possible deep oil had long been prevalent in Summerland oil circles. The Summerland Oil Development Company, with W. M. S. Moore

as president, announced in March 1898 that it would drill to lower levels on land leased from Mrs. R. L. Bushnell, located at Lillie Avenue and Temple Street, next to the Evelina Hotel. Sinking began on March 25 and Mrs. Bushnell, also a director of the company, served an elaborate luncheon to a good crowd at her home nearby. There was a jolly spirit, with the usual enthusiastic speeches and proper appreciation of the generosity of the hostess.

Work on the deep well progressed rapidly, but in May, after spending \$1,200 drilling 820 of the projected 1,000 feet, work had to be halted because the hole was crooked. This meant starting all over again, but the good news was that the old pipe could be utilized. This hardly mollified the stockholders; at the annual meeting in July, there was a "very spirited session," but those in control prevailed and the directors were reelected. The eventual outcome of the company's efforts was disappointing.

More important was the wharf franchise. After the usual three-month waiting period, J. B. Treadwell's bid of \$101 for the franchise was accepted by the county

on April 4. The franchise was for a 20-year period; the wharf was limited to 1,200 feet in length with a maximum width of 75 feet. The existence of two other Summerland wharf franchises was noted, but neither had built anything up to that time.

No Barrel Unsold

There were several significant news items bolstering the spirits of the local oil community. In April 1898, there had been an upswing in Los Angeles oil prices. Within two weeks, the exhaustion of an oil surplus and the failure of several new wells to strike oil pushed prices from 55-65 cents to above 90 cents a barrel. Large consumers were happy to sign longer-term contracts at 75-80 cents a barrel.

In Summerland, there was not a barrel of unsold oil at that time. The conversion of additional Southern Pacific and Santa Fe locomotives to oil was more good news. Col. Howe Deaderick of Carpinteria, within weeks after his appointment to the Board of Supervisors in July as a replace-

The search for oil moves offshore.



ment, arranged to use sand from Summerland oil dumps to fill potholes in the back roads of Montecito and Carpinteria.

On May 7, 1898, the Sea Cliff Oil Company, with H. L. Williams, Jr., A. Hope-Doeg and others, struck oil in one of their beach wells at 293 feet. This further confirmed the presence of oil along the tidelands and might be considered the prelude to the forthcoming wharf with its wells reaching under the sea for oil.

Henry L. Williams, Sr., was having health problems in April, but after a few days at the Montecito Hot Springs, his strength was temporarily restored and he was able to be on the street again. However, recognizing his uncertain future, he deeded a 3,000 foot strip between the railroad and the beach just west of Summerland to his wife, Agnes. Also in June, Williams leased 1,600 feet of beach frontage to Thomas D. Wood, a recent arrival from McKeesport, Pennsylvania, whose family manufactured Russian planished iron used for covering locomotive boilers.

Wood's contract called for his sinking three wells in 90 days and a total of ten within a year. Williams was to receive a royalty of ten cents a barrel. It was only a matter of weeks before Wood hit a gusher of gas and oil said to be 50 feet high!

A Major Strike

Meanwhile, Treadwell's wharf was taking form and by the middle of June 1898, his men and pile driver had completed 175 feet of the planned 1,200 feet. Treadwell did not wait for the wharf to reach its full length to start drilling; within a week or so he had a string of wells lining his wharf.

At six in the morning of July 8, 1898, Summerland residents were rudely awakened by the furious blowing of the fire

whistle, but there was no smoke or fire to be seen. The blasting was to announce to one and all that Ott and Stephenson, contract well drillers, working at the end of Treadwell's wharf, then 200 feet from shore, had a major oil strike at 390 feet in a stratum never reached before. The flow was so strong that it could not be controlled until the big pipe was capped. Then a smaller pipe was connected to conduct the oil to the storage tanks.

Boring In Water For Oil

Not unexpectedly, Treadwell's success was the topic of many street conversations in Summerland, for it revived a waning interest in possible oil development among those who previously had only indifferent success. Also, it may have halted more departures to the Klondike; some oil men had recently sold out to try their luck with Alaska gold. One comment was, "It is a very common thing to bore in sand for water, but who ever heard of anybody but a Yankee boring in water for oil-bearing sand?"

The novelty of pumping oil from under the sea drew worldwide attention to Summerland and photographs of its wharves with oil derricks have been reproduced on postcards or in books countless times. The move of oil men to the beach and into the ocean offered additional space to work, but soon these areas were crowded by conflicting interests, as the beach operators and the wharf men sometimes occupied the same location near the shore.

People were still talking about the great Treadwell oil well, when the "Summerland War" began and took up the first two weeks of August 1898. Reports are confusing and incomplete, with subtle innuendoes, but it does appear that

Treadwell's wharf, in part situated on beach land claimed by others for their wells, was the target. T. D. Wood's platform was the first structure attacked and a portion was destroyed. Then Treadwell got into a fight with W. M. S. Moore, his other neighbor. Each party had armed guards, but some of these "gunfighters" were handy with the axe. One of them chopped away a pair of supporting piles, which halted the pile driver's progress.

Strings Of Barbed Wire

The next day, the wood chopper hacked away at another bent of piling, cutting any of the chances of retreat, so the pile driver was isolated. Fences and strings of barbed wire suddenly appeared to block access from the properties and one gate was secured by a lock with a closely guarded combination. Not even the guards were privy to this information, so entry and exit had to be made by shinnying up and down piling, which was unpleasant at high tide, to say the least. Some part of the Treadwell wharf was destroyed by the guards from the other camps.

The *San Francisco Examiner* took off and ran with these events, throwing accusations about wildly. The local *Morning Press*, more reserved in its reporting and editorials, thought that the law courts should decide the guilt, if any, incurred by Treadwell. At the same time, *The Morning Press* acknowledged that Treadwell should be given credit as the moving spirit in the new Summerland development. Somehow, compromises were reached and the oil men went back to their main task of producing oil.

Treadwell's discovery of oil at lower depths encouraged others to follow suit, W. M. S. Moore being one of them.

When pulling up the tools from the 300-foot casing of one of Moore's beach wells, the workmen were surprised to see a modest flow of oil followed. This news encouraged Moore, who planned to go deeper. Further down the beach, one of T. D. Wood's wells was flowing in a similar manner.

More wells were drilled and the output increased as the months went by. Sometimes a gusher came as a surprise preamble to a flowing well. For example, late in October, one of Treadwell's drillings caused oil to dash to the top of the derrick and deluge everything, including the platform and the workmen. A few weeks later, another well announced itself in an even more violent manner.

Just before noon on November 28, 1898, an "oil well was transformed into a young volcano." One of S. W. Knapp's

The "volcanic" oil strike of S. W. Knapp, November 28, 1898.



wells on the beach was down 310 feet and the crew had smelled gas that morning. Suddenly, there was a roar and the 2,000 pound bit rushed upward through the pipe and soared into the air, knocking off the cap of the 50-foot derrick. This was followed by a flurry of stones, sand and natural gas flying several hundred feet in the sky. The men ran quickly and thus escaped injury, when the heavy drill fell and shattered the drilling platform. The outburst was short-lived; the well sputtered and finally subsided, leaving a covering of fine sand for three or four blocks.

Death Of H. L. Williams

Most of 1898, H. L. Williams' health steadily declined and it was necessary for him to go to San Francisco around the end of the summer for advanced medical attention. He would never see Summerland again, the place he had worked so hard to develop and which was now enjoying record prosperity and widespread fame.

As the San Francisco physicians refused to let Henry travel to Summerland, Mrs. Williams decided to move to San Francisco to be near her husband. Several weeks were required to pack and ship the family furniture by boat and the entire family, except Henry, Jr., who was left to take charge of the farm, departed for San Francisco.

After a long and painful illness, Henry L. Williams died in San Francisco on January 13, 1899, at the age of 58. The family returned from San Francisco for the final services conducted at the Santa Barbara Cemetery by Rev. E. F. Dinsmore.

The year 1899 marked the peak of the oil excitement and wharf construction in Summerland. It started with another torrent of dirt and debris from Knapp's new well, exceeding the spectacular perfor-

mance of his previous well. Overnight, the new well simmered down and soon yielded 25 barrels a day—a high figure for Summerland wells. The new wells of the Santa Barbara Oil and Mining Company also responded to pumping.

T. D. Wood sank several new wells; Edwin Stevens was trying his luck at Loon Point, just east of Summerland, and the nearby well of W. D. Robinson was down 400 feet. Dwight Kempton was now in charge of Mrs. H. L. Williams' wells and J. C. Lillis was ready to begin drilling from his recently completed platform. Total output of the district was now running about 11,000 barrels a month from 200 wells. In spite of the dedication to oil, the town paused long enough to observe the anniversary of Dewey's victory at Manila. There were the usual patriotic speeches, foot races and jumping contests, all winding up with a dinner for the observants.

More Wharves And Conflicts

In July 1899, the sounds of several pile drivers were heard along the coast as more wharves were stretched out into the ocean. The Oxnard Oil Company was ready to build its wharf, but its location disturbed J. C. Lillis, for it would have crossed his property. A. Hope-Doeg assured Lillis that the Oxnard wharf would be altered to avoid conflict. Part of the problem was the Summerland shoreline followed a slight concave formation, so that, like overlapping spokes of a carriage wheel, conflicts could not be avoided.

Lillis already had one wharf along his west line, but to be sure of freedom from encroachment, he hastened to build another wharf along his east line, which was close to his neighbor, the Oxnard Oil Company. In spite of concern, a repeti-



This superb aerial view shows the railroad after its 1902 realignment. The long wharf in the center is the Treadwell wharf. Loon Point is in right background.

ion of the previous year's difficulties, when "gunfighters and hatchet men" were imported from Santa Barbara at \$2 a day, was avoided. Part of the problem stemmed from changing laws, revised surveys and litigation, a course of events found in most Western mining districts.

By August 1899, each of the eighteen wells on Treadwell's wharf was yielding an average of four barrels a day. Those wells at the end of the wharf were less productive than those closer to the shore. As the longest wharf at Summerland, it was also used by ships discharging timbers or new wharves. The Oxnard Oil Com-

pany, which was extending its wharf 400 feet, hoped to catch some of this commercial trade, as well as to extend its drilling platforms.

At this time, most of the Summerland output went to the new sugar beet factory at Oxnard under three contracts. The oil refinery at Alcatraz Landing near Gaviota and the Southern Pacific were the other large purchasers of Summerland oil.

There was an interesting Sunday wedding in Summerland on August 6, 1899, at the bride's little cottage on the hill, which was followed by a reception in the New Library Hall. The groom, Rev. David Davis, aged 92, was joined in marriage to Mrs. Lucy E. G. Bennet, who was 85. The groom ex-

plained his outlook for his future when he said, "I have now been without a wife for 20 years; now that I am married again, I mean to live with this one for 20 years." Three generations of the family were present, and at the wedding supper, one table had more than 30 people over 70 years of age. (The groom lived until 1904.)

Though oil had overshadowed the importance of their move to Summerland, the Spiritualists held their 1899 camp meeting in August and some familiar names were represented. Prof. J. S. Loveland gave the introductory talk, J. T. Lillie came to sing and Mrs. R. S. Lillie gave an address.

As summer moved into fall, more wharves were built to provide drilling platforms. While some companies drilled

their own wells, others engaged outside contractors for this work. Among the independents was the firm of Lambert Brothers Drilling Company. Long-time residents of Summerland, the brothers Albert and Frank had worked with local oil operators before starting their own business.

J. C. Wilson, as previously mentioned, leased the Southern Pacific Railroad right-of-way for oil drilling, but then sold his lease to E. S. Robinson. With Floyd J. Hickey and W. H. Goodnow, Robinson formed the Southern Pacific Oil Company and transferred the right-of-way lease to the company, along with contributions of oil land from the other men. Within a year, Southern Pacific Oil Company had constructed two 500-foot wharves along with a 200-foot platform parallel to shore. Including its beach frontage, the company operated a dozen wells with monthly production of 1,200 barrels in 1900. E. S. Robinson was also associated with his father in the Robinson Oil Company.

While the Southern Pacific Oil Company had no corporate connection with the railroad, the latter company did engage in oil operations in Summerland through its subsidiaries, first with the Kern Trading and Oil Company and later through the Southern Pacific Land Company.

The Duquesne Oil Company was incorporated May 27, 1899, by Thomas D. Wood and R. H. Herron of the Los Angeles office of the Oil Well Supply Company. Duquesne Oil's purpose was to be the corporate home of Wood's oceanfront lease from H. L. Williams, as well as to hold the supply contracts with the Oxnard sugar beet factory. Initially, the company built a 700-foot platform along the water's edge and then added a wharf to accommodate more wells. By 1900, it had 21 wells in operation with a daily output of 100 barrels.

And so, the first decade of the life of Summerland ended on a note of prosperity and the death of Henry L. Williams. The Seaside Oil Company was still in its infancy, but had already taken its first steps. In September 1898, it acquired a half-interest in eight lots in Block 41 from Grant Dewlaney, who was superintendent of J. B. Treadwell's operations in Summerland. A year later, Seaside leased part of Block 40 from E. T. Slight and agreed to take over existing pumping operations and also to sink six new wells within a year. Seaside Oil became the dominant force in Summerland oil. Summerland's first decade ends in 1899, the year of greatest oil production in its history.

•• Epilogue ••

The history of Summerland during the subsequent eight-plus decades warrants a detailed account, but only a few items will be chronicled here and the reader is referred to other works for more information on Summerland in this century.⁵

The excitement and activity of 1898-99 continued into 1900. One of the Duquesne wells was so exuberant that its flow was capped only after several days of difficult work. Duquesne extended its wharf

and Sunset Oil brought in new wells, but there were also negative factors, such as adverse court decisions concerning land titles, more government regulations and accusations of fraud. In March, the Southern Pacific Oil Company welcomed the largest gusher yet reported in Summerland.

However, in spite of the good news, production in 1900 was down 26% from the previous (peak) year, when the output

was 208,370 barrels. From then on, reported production declined almost every year; in 1906 it was down to 81,848 barrels, 61% less than in 1899. A typical Summerland well would begin with an output of five barrels each day but, within a year, it would be reduced by one-half and after two years to one-fourth of the initial output. The tale of one of the Duquesne wells illustrates the rapid exhaustion of the field. Brought in during May 1898 with a flow of six barrels, the output a year later was three barrels and, in the summer of 1900, it was down to one and three-quarter barrels.

Dwindling Production

Total Summerland production from 1895 to 1906 inclusive was 1,373,989 barrels, excluding 1896 for which no figures are available. At the end of 1899, there were 22 operating companies and twelve wharves in use. By December 1903, 412 wells had been drilled, but only 198 were still in operation; of the balance, 114 were not producing and 100 had been abandoned.

As 1907 began, the number of oil companies had been reduced to fourteen. Summerland's big production years were over and the district had lost its importance in Santa Barbara County, as its decline was offset by major discoveries elsewhere in the county, starting with Santa Maria in 1900.

Summerland's first decade in this century included a series of damaging fires and storms. Just before Christmas 1901, an early morning fire destroyed the refining plant of the Santa Barbara Asphalt Company. Then in April 1903, three business houses went up in flames on the same day and a "disgraceful fight" was recorded, but any connection between the two

events has not been established. Literary Hall, the largest building in Summerland, succumbed to a fire in November 1905. A rambling, three-story affair, Literary Hall had held an important place in the lives of local citizens, but had been vacant and forgotten in recent years.

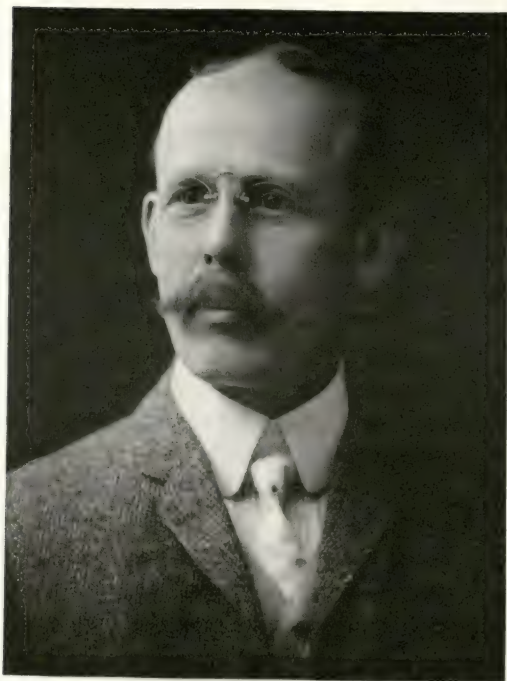
Rain Gods Poured

There were major storms in 1903: a strong rain appeared in the spring, but the heaviest storm in 20 years occurred in December and raised havoc with the now-famous Summerland oil wharves; over a dozen were damaged. During March 1906, the whole south coastal area was drenched, but the rain gods concentrated their downpour on Summerland. On March 12, eight inches of rain were measured during one and a half hours of the afternoon. The pipes of the domestic water system were left in disarray and, lacking water for industrial use, the oil plants were shut down pending repairs.

Settling the Henry L. Williams estate was a complicated matter but, in May 1907, David C. Williams purchased the Ortega Ranch. He was not related to the founder of Summerland, but was born in Wales in 1863. He, too, was in the coal mining business, as was H. L. Williams, but in West Virginia. Coming to Santa Barbara in 1905, he acquired considerable property in Mission Canyon, as well as in Santa Barbara, and was active in city affairs.

Widow Marries Becker

A year after the death of her husband, Mrs. H. L. Williams married George F. Becker, a man of some means. He purchased a controlling interest in the former H. L. Williams oil properties, which he



George Becker, who, after his marriage to the widow of H. L. Williams, became one of the major entrepreneurs of the Summerland oil industry. His home is now the Big Yellow House restaurant.

operated as the G. F. Becker Oil Company; subsequently, he formed the Summerland Oil Company as their corporate home.

Becker had his share of troubles with the elements. For example, in February 1912, high winds toppled five of his oil derricks. The same winds flattened the long-vacant printing office at one in the morning with a "thunderous report" heard throughout the village.

The Spiritualists continued to hold their annual camp meetings in Summerland; in November 1913, Miss J. S. Lillie was the musical director. Later in the day,

the Ladies Mite Society served dinner in another part of the temple, which was called "Liberty Hall."

Summerland's industries involved other matters besides oil. In 1901-03, oysters were planted in shoreline beds for commercial purposes. Then, from 1917 to 1919, kelp was harvested along the Santa Barbara coast and treated in Summerland plants for its badly needed potash. Formerly supplied by German sources, potash was no longer available as the European war progressed, but kelp offered an alternate source.

Various industrial companies appeared before the Board of Supervisors of Santa Barbara County in the early fall of 1916 seeking concessions to harvest limited amounts of kelp, paying the county a royalty for the tonnage harvested. Several harvesting plants were built along the coast near Santa Barbara. A Congressional appropriation allotted \$175,000 for an experimental plant and Summerland was the site selected. The Lorned Manufacturing Company, based in St. Louis, began its operations in the spring of 1917. Working under the direction of Dr. John W. Turrentine of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Lorned and others sent barges with large shears as far as Gaviota to make seasonal harvests of kelp. The barges brought it to Summerland, where it was dumped in the surf and most of it washed ashore. It was dried on large sheets of corrugated iron and then burned. The smell was "awful," but some people liked the smoke, as they felt that it helped clear their lungs.

Not all the kelp found its way to the shore on schedule, so Lorned contracted with the two Green brothers, Byron "Barney" and Tom, to rescue the errant part of the crop. Each member of the rescue crew on this job received a dollar a

day and three meals. I. A. Bonilla, a man whose career included all kinds of jobs, was one of the men in the surf using his pitchfork to retrieve the lost kelp.

The kelp plants shut down after the war, but the oil and gas business continued at the same slow pace which had prevailed since 1907. Cone's natural gas wells supplied about 20 families until about 1912, but the Darling wells, using pumps since 1911, were still furnishing natural gas to 24 families as late as 1915. The oil wells, pumped by a series of jerk lines powered by a distant motor, fed about a barrel of oil to a tank each day. Each pair of lines served eight or ten wells on a long wharf or perhaps on different wharves, patiently pumping with a routine reminding one of wooden soldiers. Local residents, wandering down to the beach at night, knew their exact location as each jerk line had its own distinctive sound.

George F. Becker's Summerland Oil Company began sinking a deep hole at the southwest corner of Temple Street and the Coast Highway (Lillie Avenue) in 1927. He was soon joined by George F. Getty, Inc., which firm agreed to push the well down to 3,000 feet. Persistence ruled, but the rewards were absent, for the drillers continued down to 5,041 feet without finding oil.

Gusher Fades

In 1929, when oil speculation ran all over Santa Barbara County (the Mesa in Santa Barbara was then a beehive of drilling activity), *The Morning Press* of July 4 startled its readers with a headline reading, "Gusher Blows in at Summerland." Williams No. 1, located on the beach below Ortega Hill, had a small gusher after hitting oil at 1,200 feet and was to yield 1,000 barrels a day! Careful reading of the



James Sloan came to Summerland in 1897 as Southern Pacific agent. He became a stockholder in the North Star Oil Company, had extensive Summerland real estate holdings and pursued a successful political career in Santa Barbara. (Photo: Carpinteria Valley Historical Society)

story, however, revealed that this was an expectation; even so, the Lincoln Drilling Company people planned to install two 5,000 barrel tanks nearby. Soon oil was flowing into a tank but, instead of the thousand barrels expected, it was only 25 to 30 barrels per hour. More disappointing was that the flow soon waned; in all, production was only 300 barrels.

Mention should be made of certain Summerland citizens who were also successful in other endeavors. Ira K. Eaton, a 22-year-old carpenter in Summerland in 1898, was later Captain Eaton with boats serving Santa Cruz Island. James E. Sloan, the Southern Pacific agent since the station was opened, was transferred to Oxnard and then to Santa Barbara in 1913, where he was subsequently elected to the city council, becoming mayor in 1920. He was the second mayor to come from Summerland; the other was Thomas D. Wood, the oil producer, who was

mayor of Santa Barbara from 1906 to 1908.

In the last several years, there has been a flurry of residential building in Summerland, as part of the population expansion of Southern California. The oil derricks and wharves along the shore have been gone for several decades and, in their place, are the oil derrick platforms some distance away in the ocean.

.. NOTES ..

1. The origin of the name "Summerland" is open to question. Some say that it was the product of Williams' fertile imagination, while others attribute it to part of Andrew Jackson Davis' book, *Events in the Life of a Seer*, published in New York in several editions. In the 5th edition (1873), Davis referred to the home of departed spirits as "Summerland."

2. H. L. Williams granted the Santa Barbara Consolidated Electric Company a conditional deed to eight lots at the east end of town (Block 32) on November 9, 1895, for a power house and car barn. The deed required the building to be completed within six months "and cars to be running into said town of

Summerland" within three years. As these conditions were not met, the lots reverted to H. L. Williams.

3. According to an unverified account, H. L. Williams attempted to sink another well about 1892. However, after losing a drill in his well and being unable to recover it, in spite of diligent effort, he abandoned that project.

4. There is conflicting terminology describing the first successful well in Summerland. Finding the oil was one thing, but making some productive use of it or marketing it was another. An article in the *Summerland Advance* in December 1895, viewing the early days of Summerland oil discoveries in retrospect, offers a different tale. The first successful wells, according to this article, were those of C. A. Loomis, which began production in November 1894. The article leaves the impression that Cole made no continuous effort to produce oil and that the Kempton-Darling venture had been abandoned because the principals were uninformed as to the proper method of handling.

5. *Growing Up with Summerland* by May Lambert. Carpinteria Valley Historical Society, 1975.

The Spirit of the Big Yellow House by Kim and Rod Lathim. Kim and Rod Lathim, 1975.

Early 1920's view of Wallace Avenue, one of Summerland's main business thoroughfares until obliterated by the freeway in 1951.



"RIDE WITH SEASIDE"

Henry Kleine



Seaside Oil headquarters in the 1930's. Note filling station in center.

ON FEBRUARY 19, 1898, a small assemblage of men gathered at 121 Post Street in San Francisco. They were investors who were forming a corporation under the laws of the State of California, which became known as the Seaside Oil Company. The Articles of Incorporation stated the purposes of the company: "to acquire...hold...sell...lands, water, water rights ... to buy ... sell ... explore for ...refine...petroleum...natural gas...and other mineral substances."

The term of business was set for fifty years. The first directors of the company were: J. J. Cook, President, San Francisco, 99,995 shares/\$99,995; Joseph Musgrove, Santa Barbara, 99,990 shares/\$99,990; Joseph W. Delaney, Summerland, 5 shares/\$5; R. A. Fitzgerald, Summerland, 5 shares/\$5, and Alfred Edwards, Summerland, 5 shares/\$5.

The San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed all the records of these early years, so we will never know what

kind of return the three Summerland investors received on their \$5.00 investments.

Seaside first operated as a pumping company. John J. Cook, the first president, was a pharmacist from Maricopa and his son, John B. Cook, gave the company an early boost by developing an engine pump that could simultaneously pump six wells instead of only one. Early on, Seaside became well-known in the pumping business.

Within a short time, Seaside also became a producer and, in 1906, acquired a newly-built refinery in Summerland. This refinery opened up outlets previously lacking for the heavy Summerland crude oil. This refinery had a "throughput" capacity of 500 gallons per hour and

A native Santa Barbaran, Henry Kleine is a retired music teacher, teaching for years in the Santa Ynez Valley. He has previously contributed a number of pieces to NOTICIAS.

was capable of producing distillates and asphalts. The plant was located on a railroad spur, a short distance away from the old Treadwell wharf.

At the turn of the century, petroleum operators were constantly seeking new outlets and markets for their products. One major advantage of petroleum was its cleanliness and efficiency as a fuel for heating. The conversion of wood and coal burning furnaces to oil became a major project among sales people in those days.

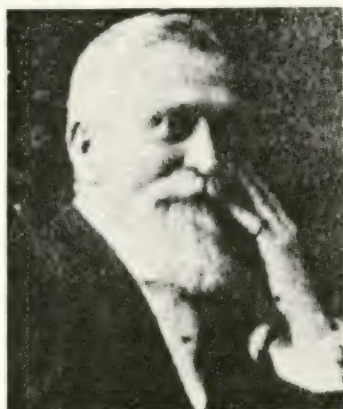
Soon Seaside began acquiring a higher grade of crude from Ojai and other sources. This marked the beginning of Seaside company products being sold through service stations. During World War I, high grade distillates were in great demand and it was during this period that the first gasoline service stations appeared in the Santa Barbara area. Filling stations were few and far between then, with motorists often strapping cans of gasoline to the running boards of their cars to stretch their travel time between refills. Among the area stations were a number operated by the Charlesworth brothers, whose experiments with petroleum products indicated that Seaside's high grade distillates could be successfully blended with gasoline, making it a satisfactory fuel for the low compression, slow-speed automobiles of the period.

The Summerland refinery suffered severe fire damage on January 7, 1921, and required rebuilding. When completed, the plant was equipped to produce gasolines of both high and low grade distillate qualities. This was Seaside's beginning as a producer of gasoline, and the company erected its first two gas stations: "A" in Santa Barbara on the corner of Montecito and Anacapa Streets and station "B" located in Ventura at the corner of Santa Clara

and California streets. As an afterthought, the company also installed a small hand pump next to the main office in Summerland. This entry into the gasoline market would change the course of the company.

Along with other pumpers, Seaside found they were pumping as much water as oil from their wells. After pumping, they stored the oil and unwanted water in tanks near the wells. The water was allowed to drain out the bottom of the tanks. This residue dripped onto the beach and into the ocean like an iridescent scum. In those bygone days, there were no laws that prohibited these types of spills.

Near the refinery in the shop area, a cooperage was added for the construction of barrels in which 450 to 500 pounds of roofing tar could be shipped. A Mr. Cruz made hundreds of these barrels that were



John J. Cook, first president of Seaside when the company was headquartered in San Francisco. (Photo: Henry Kleine)

shipped along the California coast and to the Hawaiian Islands for the waterproofing of roofs.

By the early 1920's, the usable crude of Summerland was in a semi-depleted state. As early as 1907, a federal government report stated that the oil-producing sands at Summerland had peaked and were beginning to decline. Production costs were also rising. No longer was it



early Seaside station at State and Sola. Note Our Lady of
rows Church in background. (Photo: Anthony Days)

possible to produce a barrel of oil for 25 cents, as it had been around the turn of the century. The crude from which asphalt and roofing tar was made continued to be produced at the Summerland refinery of Seaside, but major improvements in automobile engines required a higher grade of crude for distillation processes. To remain competitive in the market, Seaside had to develop refining capabilities in the higher octane levels.

Seaside therefore acquired the Chrisman refinery in Ventura in 1923. This allowed Seaside to expand into some 900 oil dealers over a period of years, covering the coast of California from San Diego to Ukiah and spread into district territories of Sacramento, Lodi, Stockton, Modesto, the Imperial Valley and even into Arizona. Later, Seaside would move into Oregon.

Although the Chrisman refinery was adequate for a number of years, it also was a factor in Seaside's ultimate demise. In the end, Seaside could not afford the installation of the cracking process which attracted the low-boiling point in gasoline, a process necessary for the manufacture of higher octane fuel. It would have

cost Seaside millions to install a modern cracking process in the old Chrisman refinery. So Seaside would have to deal with the second brands of the major oil companies.

A. M. Heineman was president of the company during these years, presiding from his Los Angeles office where he operated an asphalt business. The main office, however, remained in Summerland, departmentalized with about 20 or 30 office and refinery workers. Heineman wished to move the office to Los Angeles, but was forestalled by J. F. Bushnell, a future president of the company and his son Winslow, who was general manager. Seaside met the challenge of the Depression from its Summerland base.

Most of the major oil companies responded to the Depression by curtailing their expansion programs. Thousands were laid off and "unnecessary" programs like training schools for gas station attendants were closed. J. F. Bushnell, who became president in 1935 with the death of Heineman, took a different tack. He assured employees there would be no wage cuts or firings. Instead, Bushnell planned to add more service stations.

Seaside's aggressive marketing program succeeded in penetrating a number of agricultural and rural communities in California. A growing number of new, mechanized farm implements, along with conversion in rural areas, from wood to other heating fuels, changed life considerably. It also enlarged Seaside's markets.

G. B. Tucker, an employee in the advertising department since 1927, de-

signed a wooden plaque which read, "This Ranch Too Uses Seaside Gasolines: The Sign in the West that Ranchers Know Best."

Although perhaps more aggressive, Seaside's method of obtaining gas station sites did not vary much from the major oil companies. This involved doing surveys in localities where business potential seemed favorable. Upon discovering, through traffic patterns, which properties seemed a likely business venture, the property owner was approached by the company with a proposition to erect a service station on the owner's property. If the owner accepted, he became an owner-operator on a contractual basis, selling Seaside gasolines and accessories. To many, this seemed a way out of the Depression doldrums.

Keen Competition

The company assisted new operators with free advertising tracts and advice on the general operation of the stations. Whenever possible, Seaside's personnel department would place experienced station attendants at these new locations. Still, business was not easy for a number of operators in the early 1930's, the height of the Depression. Seaside protected itself, as did the "majors," by writing a mortgage agreement into the contracts with the operators. In the end, some operators could not make their payments and lost their properties.

Competition was keen among the petroleum companies for markets, but in one area there was agreement: they would all have to maintain a reasonable quota of reserve gasoline supplies for survival. This quota of gas reserves allowed selling to each other and tended to control prices in the common market. It also spread business around for truckers and the smaller gas companies such as "Rocket" or "Mon-

arch," ensuring business through delivery trucks which were often not aligned by contract.

J. C. Bidgood, former chief accountant for Seaside, recalls in a 1987 interview, "We would buy gas from the small companies and sell it to the 'majors.' This got it off the market, perhaps a glutted one. Trucking agents hauled it either to us or the purchasing station. This was one way to control the market so it wouldn't be destroyed by over-supply."

By the early 1930's, Summerland's petroleum supplies were nearing depletion. Seaside began to buy crude oil from Ventura Crude Oil Company. The Depression was making it difficult to get rid of residual gas supplies and Seaside was sliding into debt. One of the companies it was indebted to was Tide Water Associated Oil Company. J. C. Bidgood remembers, "They told us, 'Since you owe

[This ad courtesy of Mary Louise Days]



A GOOD MAN TO KNOW

You'll like this man. He's your nearby Seaside Dealer — an independent businessman.
His products are good — backed by the 64-year quality reputation of Seaside Oil Company. He serves you better today, so he can deserve your business tomorrow.

MEET YOUR GOOD NEIGHBOR
YOUR **Seaside** DEALER

SEASIDE OIL COMPANY • Established 1899

us such and such an amount of money for gas...if you give us this amount in Seaside stock, we'll cancel the debt.' By this method, Tide Water acquired a controlling interest in Seaside. Eventually, Tide Water took complete control [in 1946]. From that time forward, Seaside was unable to make a definitive, policy-setting decision. It became a subsidized entity of Tide Water."

New Home

One of the legacies of Bushnell's presidency of the company was the office's move from Summerland to Santa Barbara. Bushnell died in September 1937 and never realized the fruits of his several years planning for the new home of Seaside Oil in Santa Barbara. While construction of the building was being completed and a restructuring was being discussed at the executive level in the company, a gala celebration took place on November 16, 1937. Over 8,000 visitors attended the open house of the \$80,000 building at 330 State Street. Hundreds of floral displays, gardenias for the ladies and 2,000 "Silver Gull" gliders for the children were distributed. Important guests included both city and county officials, as well as prominent businessmen. Incorporated in the night festivities was a gigantic searchlight located outside the new administration building and service station. The light, with a lens 72 inches in diameter, was the largest of its kind utilized by the Army Air Force. This sort of spectacular opening was typical of the period.

The move to Santa Barbara brought greater company involvement in that community. The best known example of this was Seaside's sponsorship of the poster for the city's annual Old Spanish Days Fiesta. From 1936 through 1941,

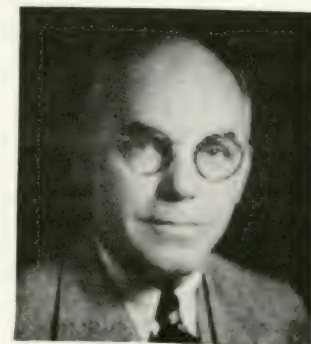
when World War II halted Fiesta for the duration, Seaside's posters appeared, created by Roy E. Lawhorne. Seaside continued to participate in the Fiesta, after their poster sponsorship, by contributing to the fireworks display at the Old Mission.

During World War II, proficient office and service help was difficult to find. Many of the women employed were trained in specialized office work to replace those men who were in military service. One Seaside woman served in the military forces. Esther Gwinnett's last tour of duty was with the WACs in New Guinea. Of the 48 Seaside employees who saw duty, two lost their lives and one was reported missing in action.

In the September 1945 issue of "Seaside News," H. B. Kellogg, president, stated, "Our citizens in uniform proved themselves in action. To them we owe a debt of gratitude... what can we do to discharge a part of our obligation? They trust us to bridge the transition for them from war to peace with as little distortion of their American way of life

as possible. I think each veteran hopes to return home and take his or her place in our economic and social life with a minimum of disturbance."

Seaside employees on the home front did their part, too. In



H. B. Kellogg, president during war years. (Photo: Mary Louise Days)

February 1944, Seaside received a "T" flag from the Treasury Department, signifying that 90% of the employees had put at least 10% of their pay into War Bonds.

With the end of World War II, Seaside and its corporate parent, Tide Water, began



their postwar expansion that saw successful forays into markets outside California. This revitalized the company tremendously. H. A. Jackson, who succeeded Kellogg as president in 1947, described Seaside's success at the company's 50th anniversary celebration at the El Paseo restaurant in Santa Barbara in 1948. He contrasted Seaside's modest beginnings with "today's growth of approximately 600 dealers in California and Arizona...including 150 employees at the main office. With the acceleration of our promotional efforts, more millions of Westerners are being advised to go to Seaside stations and buy the products. Fifteen-foot plexiglass signs at \$1,300 each have been installed throughout the state." Seaside is "climbing to new heights of visibility along rural roads in the West."

In 1954, Reuben J. Irvin replaced Harry Jackson as president. Irvin, who had begun his career in the oil business as a service station attendant in San Francisco in 1921, presided over one of the major marketing plays in Seaside's, indeed, the

Reuben Irvin presided over the introduction of Seaside's credit card. Also co-founder of Santa Barbara Bank and Trust, Irvin was Santa Barbara's Man of the Year in 1959 in recognition of his community service.

gasoline industry's history: the introduction of the all-plastic credit card. These first credit cards in the industry proved a resounding success. New account figures jumped 21% above the nine-month average in November, 1956, the month of the cards' introduction. The figures continued to improve, culminating in a record 172% mark in October 1957.

Irvin also presided over another promotional success, a 48-page, rotogravure book illustrating the beauties of California and Arizona. Seaside printed some 30,000 copies to meet requests, some of which came from overseas. In addition to his business duties, Irvin also became involved in numerous civic and charitable organizations in the Santa Barbara area and served as chairman of the board of Santa Barbara Bank and Trust until his death at the age of 90 on January 5, 1989.

Beginning Of The End

Despite some notable successes, there were also problems that would make it more difficult for Seaside to respond to changes in the industry. One was the Chrisman Refinery in Ventura. Edward Matousek, Seaside's last vice president, explained, "Once fairly adequate in the earlier years, it became antiquated without modernization. The distillation process was unable to produce the higher octane required by new cars. It had to buy the necessary blends of stocks, making the cost of gasoline uncompetitive...even in its own area. Also, retail prices at stations



The Seaside Fiesta posters are now collectors' items.

drove prices down to unprofitable levels."

Matousek went on to describe the steps that slowly led to the end of Seaside, "For sometime the major oil companies had tried to fight the price wars by using secondary brands of gasoline to protect their own brands. Thus, Standard Oil of California used "Signal," Richfield used "Rocket," Union used "Harbor" and later, Tide Water; Getty and Phillips, in turn, used Seaside. Secondary brands were supposed to meet the independent, 're-brand' prices without necessarily involving the major brands in price wars.

"For a time, the strategy gave companies like Seaside some reason to continue and survive in the modern markets. However,

the other majors were immediately challenged by Shell Oil, which used no secondary blends of brands. This ended the game. Thereafter, there was little reason for the major companies to retain their secondary supply brands, nor even to continue subsidization. A large majority of secondary brands disappeared.

"J. Paul Getty held a substantial interest in Tide Water through its various holding companies. During the Fifties, recurring rumors were extant that Tide Water, an eastern company, wanted to sell off Seaside or that Seaside and Tide Water would merge with other Getty interests such as Skelly Oil, but nothing was consummated.

"Penultimately, Tide Water itself rumored a need to divest itself by selling its entire West Coast refinery and marketing assets, including Seaside. Tide Water's primary business interests were on the East Coast and that is where they wished to concentrate their business.

"The first would-be buyer of Seaside was Humble, later part of Exxon. Almost consummated, the sale fell through at the last minute, due to anti-trust objections raised by the Justice Department of the Federal government. Phillips Petroleum then stepped in and proceeded with the purchase of Seaside, despite continuing objections of the Justice Department."

Market Expansion

Despite the unknowns surrounding the ultimate fate of Seaside, the company continued to expand into new markets in the mid-1960's under the presidency of Benjamin F. Avery. Seaside financed and leased dozens of new, high-volume stations throughout California and into Nevada and parts of Utah. Many of these stations sold their own or other brands, so

that while Seaside's sales volume increased, its name recognition did not keep pace. Federal and state taxes and price wars among the oil companies kept profits low, so that many of the new stations



(Photos this page and back cover courtesy of Anthony Days.)

became a financial burden rather than a source of profit.

Shortly after Phillips' purchase of Seaside, Avery was replaced as president by long-time Phillips executive John Guy in May 1967. Edward Matousek, vice-president at the time, explains the changes that then occurred at Seaside: "When John Guy succeeded to the presidency, there followed considerable restructuring of Seaside, especially in the pattern of Phillips' policies and organization. Seaside was now in the forefront of an industry trend in which stations formerly leased to dealers were converted to operation by Company employees. These stations used self service instead of the Seaside employees and eliminated everything (tires, batteries, etc.) except gasoline. Re-brands were used instead of the Seaside name.

"Seaside became one of the first companies to make widespread use of women service station attendants and supervisors. Guy also turned his attention to sales of unbranded gasolines. In this type of business, an oil company would pick up gasoline at the refinery or terminal at wholesale prices, but with no permission for the

buyer to use its own name. These strategies of salary operation and unbranded sales illustrate the fact that years of violent price competition had drastically reduced the value of Seaside's brand. The ultimate demise of the Seaside Company came in April, 1973, when Phillips Petroleum, the sole stockholder, ineluctably dissolved the Seaside Corporation and absorbed all its assets into its own organization."

Like many other small, regional oil companies, Seaside ultimately could not make the adjustments necessary to survive in a rapidly expanding national, indeed international, petroleum market. Yet the company's 75-year history was not without achievement. From John Cook's early inventions that made Seaside's name in the pumping business, innovation had been a key to Seaside's growth. The firm had been a leader in the use of credit cards, in marketing ethyl gasoline and in employing women in areas traditionally reserved to men. And the innovations had paid off, as Seaside grew from its modest start in Summerland into a name recognized across the western U.S. For 75 years, it had been a great "Ride With Seaside."



In Memoriam

Walker A. Tompkins



The local history community was dealt another great blow with the recent passing of Walker A. Tompkins. The prolific chronicler of Santa Barbara's past had over ten books of local history to his credit. In addition, for years he kept Santa Barbarans apprised of their heritage through his daily radio program and his weekly newspaper column. A long-time member of the Society, he served on the Board of Trustees from 1979-1984 and was a member of the library and publications committees. His eye for the good story and his ability to both educate and entertain will be sorely missed. [Photo: Barbara Tompkins]

• New Books of Note •

• Jarrell Jackman, Executive Director of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, recently authored *Santa Barbara: Historical Images and Themes*. In its hundreds of illustrations, this pictorial history documents Santa Barbara's past from Chumash times to the present.

• Members will best remember W. Edwin Gledhill for his years as Executive Director of the Society, but he had a successful earlier career with his first wife, Carolyn, as a portrait photographer. Keith and David Gledhill have documented the Gledhills' art in *The Gledhills Portraits*. The book includes photographs of nationally known and locally prominent figures and features a number of early autochrome color portraits.

• *Public Justice: A History of the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, 1850-1985* is the sixth in the series of monographs put out by the Graduate Program in Public Historical Studies at UC Santa Barbara. This thorough study is also illustrated with a number of photographs.

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